Stories from SIKH HISTORY

Book-V

Hemkunt

PC-53

STORIES FROM
SIKH HISTORY
BOOK-V
(The Sikh Martyrs)

by
Kartar Singh M.A.,
and
Gurdial Singh Dhillon
edited by
Pam Macormack

Hemkunt Press
A-78 Naraina Indl. Area Phase-I New Delhi-110028

© Hemkunt Press 1971
Twentieth Impression 1996
ISBN 81-7010-010-0

This book is copyright in all countries which are signatories to the Berne Convention. No Portion of the Book may be reprinted or reproduced in any form without the permission of the publishers.

IN THIS SERIES

Book I
Guru Nanak Dev

Book II
Guru Angad to Guru Arjun Dev

Book III
Guru Hargobind to Guru Teg Bahadur

Book IV
Guru Gobind Singh

Book V
Sikh Martyrs

Book VI
Banda Singh Bahadur

Book VII
Maharaja Ranjit Singh and thereafter till 1989

Printed at : Batra Art Printers, New Delhi - 110 028

FOREWORD

In this book you will read about some of your noble and glorious ancestors who passed through the portals of Death to achieve everlasting life. They gave up their lives on this earth and returned to the Abode of God, to live there for all times to come. Yet they will live also on this earth as long as the noble cause for which they lived and accepted death persists and flourishes.

Some misguided people were determined to make their own religion the only religion of the land over which they ruled. To all who shared not their faith, they offered the choice between either to give up their faith or face death.

Your ancestors of whom you will read in the following pages were all offered the above choice. They made their choice of death without even a minute's hesitation. Offers of every sort of earthly joys and pleasures were made to them in wild profusion. They disdained even to look at any of them. They were asked to give up their faith.

They remained firm and unshaken. They feared neither tortures nor death. Consequently, they were subjected to untold, unheard of sufferings and tortures. They bore everything with wonderful patience and calm, nay, even with manifest joy. They gave up their lives, but they did not give up their faith. They died to live for ever. They became martyrs. They became immortal. They live for us, they will live for all times and for all generations to come as sources of inspiration, ever reminding us of our duty, ever endowing us with courage and strength to perform that duty well and faithfully.

Kartar Singh

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2018 with funding from
Kahle/Austin Foundation

https://archive.org/details/storiesfromsikhh0000sing

CONTENTS

		Page
1. Guru Arjan Dev	...	7
2. Guru Tegh Bahadur	...	17
3. Bhais Mati Das, Dial Das and Sati Das	...	33
4. The Beloved Five	...	39
5. Baba Ajit Singh, Baba Jujhar Singh	...	45
6. Baba Zorawar Singh, Baba Fateh Singh	...	51
7. Baba Banda Singh Bahadur	...	64
8. Bhai Tara Singh	...	74
9. Bhai Mani Singh	...	78
10. Bhais Bota Singh and Garja Singh	...	83
11. Bhai Mehtab Singh	...	88
12. Bhai Taru Singh	...	93
13. The Lesser Holocaust	...	98
14. Sardar Subeg Singh, Shahbaz Singh	...	103
15. Baba Dip Singh	...	107
16. The Great Holocaust	...	110

1

GURU ARJAN DEV

Guru Arjan Dev was the fifth Guru of the Sikhs. He was the first Sikh Martyr. A martyr is a person who is punished with death for refusing to give up his faith. A person who suffers or sacrifices his life, for a great cause is also called a martyr. Guru Arjan Dev is called a martyr, because he went through untold bodily sufferings for the noble cause of freedom of faith and worship; because he condemned the rulers and the rich for their tyranny over the people; because he aroused in people's hearts a sense of dignity and self-respect, and because he refused to give up his faith and embrace Islam. Because of all that, he was ordered to be put to death by torture.

Guru Arjan Dev took up his duties as the fifth Guru in September 1581 A.D. At that time Akbar was the Emperor of India. He was a pious, kind-hearted and liberal-minded man. He was not a fanatic Muslim. He treated all his subjects in the same manner. He wanted all his subjects, Muslims as well as non-Muslims, to be equal citizens of his empire. His aim was to make his empire a secular State. All religions were to be treated alike. Islam was only one of the religions in the empire. The law of Islam was not to be the law of the land.

Akbar had a very favourable and high opinion of the Sikhs and their Gurus. He took special pains to meet and befriend them.

Akbar was succeeded by his son, Jahangir, in October 1605 A.D. He was altogether different from his father. He was not pious, kind-hearted, or liberal-minded. He changed

the religious policy of the empire. He made Islam the law of the land. The qazis became the law-givers. They were all fanatic and bigoted. They believed that their own religion was the only true religion. In their view all other religions were false. All such religions were, to them, forms of falsehood or *kufar.* Their followers were called '*kafirs*' or infidels, worshippers of falsehood. The qazis believed that '*kafirs*' had no right to live in a Muslim State. In their opinion, the law of Islam required that all non-Muslim subjects must be converted to Islam or killed. Those who accepted Islam, were given special favours and concessions. Those who did not give up their faith were subjected to all sorts of hardships.

Guru Arjan Dev's martyrdom was a result of this religious policy of Jahangir.

Guru Arjan Dev took up his duties in September 1581. He was a great organizer and an able administrator. He set about organizing and uniting the Sikhs, increasing their numbers and improving their position. His manifold activities infused public spirit into the Sikh community.

From the time of Guru Nanak, Hindus as well as Muslims, had been accepting the Sikh faith of their own accord and free will. They had been drawn into the Sikh fold charmed by the life and teachings of the Gurus. The Muslim rulers and the qazis did not like the conversion of Muslims to Sikhism. Under Guru Arjan Dev's influence also both Hindus and Muslims in large numbers became Sikhs.

The rapid development of the Sikhs at this time, and the ever-growing influence of Guru Arjan Dev, annoyed Jahangir and his qazis. Their annoyance was only natural. They aimed at converting all non-Muslims to Islam. But they found that under Guru Arjan Dev's influence, Muslims were giving up their own faith and embracing Sikhism. This they could never tolerate. It had to be checked. An end had to be put to Guru Arjan Dev's life and activities.

Emperor Jahangir came to the throne in October 1605. Guru Arjan Dev had been carrying on his work since September 1581, that is, for over twenty-four years. He had achieved brilliant success. The qazis and other fanatic Muslims were furious. They would sometimes, meet the Emperor and complain to him against the Guru. They said, 'In Goindwal, which is on the bank of the river Beas in the Panjab, there is a religious teacher named (Guru) Arjan. He is looked upon as a holy saint. He has a great following. He preaches a religion which is opposed to Islam. It is called Sikhism. He has become very popular. Not only Hindus, but even Muslims, are being charmed and captured by his ways, life, and teachings. From all sides crowds of people—Hindus and Muslims—flock to him. They express devotion to him and faith in him. They give up their own religion and embrace the religion preached by him. Muslims in large numbers have become his followers or Sikhs. More and more are doing so every day. All this is happening in the empire of a Muslim Emperor. It is very sad and saddening. It is your duty to stop this. We appeal to you to do your duty towards Islam.'

Jahangir, as a matter of fact, was of the same view. As he says in his Memoirs called *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, he had been having the same thoughts for many years. 'For many years,' writes he, 'the thought had been coming into my mind that I should either put an end to his (Guru Arjan's) life and activities, or bring him into the fold of Islam.' He assured the qazis and other that he would do this at the first suitable opportunity.

Emperor Jahangir had thus clearly and finally made up his mind to convert or kill Guru Arjan Dev. He was on the look-out for a suitable chance and excuse to carry out that resolve.

That chance came to him about six months after his having occupied the throne.

Jahangir, as we have already said, was waiting for a chance to carry out his evil design against Guru Arjan Dev. He got the long-sought chance in the rebellion of his eldest son, Khusrau. He did not want to miss it. He jumped at it.

Prince Khusrau had been Akbar's favourite. Akbar had wished that Khusrau should be the Emperor after him. But Jahangir managed to seize the throne. Prince Khusrau rose in rebellion against his father, Jahangir but he was defeated. He fled towards Lahore pursued by Jahangir himself. During his march from Agra to Lahore, Jahangir made enquiries to find out who had helped or sympathized with his rebel son. He punished all those who were reported to have shown any interest in Khusrau. For example, Sheikh Nazam of Thanesar was reported to have prayed for Khusrau's success and welfare. He was exiled and sent to Mecca.

Emperor Jahangir passed through the tract of the Majha. He even stopped at Goindwal, where the Guru was supposed to be residing at the time. He passed by Tarn Taran, where Guru Arjan was then actually staying. But no complaint reached his ears at these places about the Guru having helped Khusrau in any way. If the Guru had even met the rebel Prince, the fact would have been known to the Emperor's officials, qazis and others. They would not have failed to bring the matter to his notice. Moreover, the Guru had a number of enemies. They would have hurried eagerly to meet the Emperor to report against the Guru. But the Emperor received no report against Guru Arjan Dev anywhere, from official or non-official sources.

All this clearly shows that Guru Arjan Dev had not met or helped Khusrau.

The Emperor reached Lahore without having received any report or complaint against Guru Arjan Dev. Khusrau was captured at the banks of the Chenab. He was brought to Lahore. His helpers and companions were all put to death. His eye lids were sewn up and he was imprisoned for life.

About a month passed in this way. Even during this period, no report or complaint was received against Guru Arjan Dev.

After having punished Khusrau and his friends, Jahangir got ready to leave Lahore. It was at that time that a report was made to him against the Guru. It was reported that the Guru had befriended the rebel Prince. Here is what the Emperor wrote about it in his Memoirs :

'At that time Khusrau crossed the river and passed that way (that is, by Goindwal). That foolish fellow resolved to secure the Guru's services. He encamped at that place where the Guru resided. He met him and talked of past affairs with him. With his finger he (Guru Arjan) made on the Prince's forehead a saffron mark called *tilak*. This mark is considered by the Hindus to be a sign of good luck. I fully knew of his *kufar* or false beliefs and false propaganda. When this matter was reported to me, I ordered that he should be brought into my presence, that his houses and children should be made over to Murtza Khan, that his property should be confiscated, and that he should be put to death with torture.'

In accordance with these orders of the Emperor, his men went to Amritsar in order to arrest the Guru and take him to Lahore.

On seeing Jahangir's men and learning of their object, the Sikhs became afraid and sad. They approached the Guru and said, 'O True King, when Sulhi Khan came to attack you, you prayed to God. Your prayer was accepted. Sulhi Khan fell from his horse and was reduced to ashes in a kiln. Do the same now, O true King. Pray to God. He will accept your prayer. He will punish your enemies. He will save you.'

The Guru replied, 'No, my dear Sikhs. Times are different now. My duty is different now. My prayer must also be different. Baba Nanak has said, "Those who are

eager to follow my path of love, should be ever prepared to die most readily and joyously. They should first place their heads on their palms, and then enter the lane leading to my abode. Only those should enter this path who can part with their heads without the least hesitation or fear."

'I entered Baba Nanak's path knowing full well what was expected of me. Shall I be found wanting ? I must not hesitate to die. Moreover, I have done no wrong to anybody. Jahangir has no case against me. I have never 'converted' any Muslim or Hindu. I have never asked or persuaded anyone to enter the Sikh fold. People come, they see and hear, and they accept the Faith. Why should the Emperor object ? Why should he be angry ? People should be free to choose their faith and form of worship. Different religions are really different paths leading to the Abode of God. But the Emperor is out to deny freedom of faith and worship to his subjects. That is not proper. I would like to change this. I shall let myself be tortured and killed. The story of my torture and of the manner in which I bear it will have a wholesome effect on the Emperor. He will change for the better, I hope.

'Moreover, I have been telling people to accept even His bitterest Will with joy. I must practise what I teach and preach. I am glad that God is granting me an opportunity to do that. I must hail and accept it. The tale of my tortures will arouse the people. They will feel an urge to effect a change. It will fill them with a firm resolve to end the rule under which such things are made to happen. They will rise to assert their rights. My son, Guru Har Gobind, will arm them and train them to fight and die for their faith. I shall not die in vain. As for the torture it will affect my body but not me. I shall not feel it. I shall be in His lap all the time.

'My dears, God has arranged all things well and wisely, and for the best benefit of His people. Why should I pray to Him to change His scheme of things ? All will be for the good of my people. It will advance my people on the path laid

down for them by Baba Nanak. My death will drive the first nail in the cruel Mughals' coffin.

'More, many more, will follow. So let me go. Get ready to become God's warriors, champions of truth and liberty, friends of men and foes of all tyrants . Be ready to fight for your faith and principles under the command of Guru Har Gobind. He has been specially trained to be a soldier. He will lead you to victory. Cheer up, therefore, and let me go.'

The Sikhs bowed and said no more. The Guru then offered prayers at Har Mandir, the Temple of God. He prayed for strength to bear everything without a groan or complaint.

He then offered himself for arrest. Jahangir's men arrested him and took him to Lahore. Five Sikhs went with him. He forbade all others to accompany him.

So Jahangir gave orders that Guru Arjan Dev should be arrested and brought into his presence. But he did not wait for the Guru's production before him. Having instructed his officers at Lahore how to treat the Guru, he left for Delhi. An official named Chandu took upon himself the work of killing the Guru by torture. This Chandu was a Khatri of Lahore, holding an office in Jahangir's court at Delhi. He had wanted to marry his daughter to Guru Arjan Dev's son, Sri Har Gobind, but he had used insulting words against the Guru. The Sikhs of Delhi had heard these words. They had requested the Guru not to accept Chandu's offer. The Guru had conceded to their request. On this account Chandu had become a bitter enemy of the Guru. It was for this reason that he undertook to put the Guru to death by torture.

Chandu took the Guru to his house. There he began to torture him. During the first day and night, the Guru was kept without food and drink. He was not allowed to sleep. We have to remember that all this was taking place in mid-summer at Lahore, which is a very hot place. The Guru

remained absorbed in meditation. He kept repeating God's Name all the time.

On the second day, he was seated in a large vessel of water heated from below. The water was made to boil. The Guru sat in the boiling water, calmly meditating on God. Then red-hot sand was poured over his head and body. On the third day, he was seated on a red-hot iron plate which was heated from below. Again, red-hot sand was poured on his head and body. These tortures went on for four days.

Several *Jogis* and religious men, who had met and admired the Guru, went to him to express their sympathy and horror. Hazrat Mian Mir, the renowned Muslim saint of Lahore, also went for that purpose. He was struck with horror on seeing what was being done to the Guru. He cried aloud and shed bitter tears of anguish. Then he said to the Guru, 'You are gifted with immense spiritual powers. You are a true devotee of Almighty God. True devotees of God are as mighty as He. You possess the power to destroy those who are putting you to these tortures. Why don't you use those powers ? Why do you helplessly bear these dreadful tortures ? Surely, if you were to wish it, God would at once come to your help. If you were to wish it, He would surely come, destroy the wicked people, and end your sufferings.

'If you do not want to use your powers, if you do not want to call upon God to come and save you, then permit me to do so. I am sure He will come. May I ?'

Guru Arjan Dev replied, 'My dear friend, what you say is right. But I would not resort to miracle-working in order to save myself from suffering or death. Men of God never use their God-given powers for such purposes. I want to let things happen as He wills them to happen. I don't wish to interfere in the working of His Will. I have been telling my Sikhs, "Remember Him in weal and woe, in pleasure and in pain. Accept as sweet and pleasant even His most bitter and painful Will. Regard all pleasure and pain, all joys and sorrows, as His sweet gifts."

'I am lucky, indeed, that God has granted me an opportunity to prove the truth of my words. In my heart of hearts I have prayed for such an opportunity. It has been given to me. I hail it and avail myself of it with utmost joy and thanks. I should not now like even God to take away this opportunity from me. By bearing all these tortures, I want to let the people see that what I teach can be put into practice too. That will strengthen them to bear, in the same manner, all that He may cause to happen. Hard times are coming. My people will be called upon to pass through extreme and severe sufferings for their faith. I wish to show how such sufferings have to be accepted and borne. I want to set an example to teachers and devotees of the True Name and Truth. I want to teach them that they should not complain against God and His will. The true test of faith is the hour of misery. Without examples to guide them, ordinary persons' minds give way and are shaken in the midst of suffering. My example will inspire and strengthen them.

'Secondly, a truly religious man should have the strength to suffer every form of torture for the sake of his faith. He should openly profess it, declare it, and stick to it, come what may. God has given me that strength. I must use it, so that weaker ones may take heart and follow my example.

'In the third place, the body is subject to pleasure and pain. The spirit is above these things. Hence, with His grace, I can rise above the torture imposed on my body. My spirit is absorbed in meditating on God. The body has to perish one day. I would not set aside this law of nature. Let His Will be done. Let the body perish in the way He Wills it to perish. His Will is sweet. I am content and at peace. Don't worry my friend. All is well. Pray for me that I may be able to bear with calmness and joy all that He may be pleased to make me endure.'

Mian Mir bowed to the Guru and took his leave.

The Guru's body was all blisters. It was rendered soft like boiled flesh. It became extremely weak. At last he was made to walk to the river Ravi. His five Sikhs were permitted to be with him on the way, to help and support him. To add to his tortures, his blistered body was thrown into the cold water of the Ravi. It was too weak to stand against the force of the fast-flowing stream. It was washed away to its final rest. The Guru's soul flew to the bosom of the All-loving Father of all.

Emperor Jahangir's orders were thus carried out. Guru Arjan Dev was 'killed by torture'. All the same, Guru Arjan Dev is not dead. He lives in the hearts of millions of his devoted followers and admirers. He lives in the hundreds of sacred songs which he composed and embodied in the Sacred Granth. He will live as long as the lofty principles and ideals preached and practised by him are valued by mankind. He was one with God on earth; he is one with God in heaven now. He will live as long as God lives in the hearts of men. His death made him immortal. He will remain a source of ever-fresh inspiration to all who feel an urge for a life of the spirit; to all who yearn for such a world-order as was pictured and preached by Guru Arjan Dev, namely, that of 'enmity with none and friendship for all'.

Guru Arjan Dev was martyred in May 1606, that is, seven months after Jahangir came to the throne. His words about the Guru quoted above were written by him on June 13, 1606, that is, a fortnight after the Guru's martyrdom.

At the spot where the Guru's body was thrown into the river was later erected a Gurdwara. It is called Dehra Sahib. Before 'Partition' a big fair, called Jor Mel, was annually held there to celebrate the Guru's martyrdom.

2

GURU TEGH BAHADUR

After Jahangir, his son, Shah Jahan, became the Emperor. He continued the religious policy of his father, but in a milder form. He wanted his eldest son, Dara Shikoh, to succeed him on the throne of Delhi. Dara Shikoh was a pious, kind-hearted and liberal-minded man. If he had succeeded his father, India's subsequent history would have been far different. Sikh history, too, would have taken a different course. Dara Shikoh was an admirer of the Sikh Gurus.

But that was not to be. Shah Jahan fell seriously ill. His sons thought that he was about to die. They began to fight among themselves for the throne. Aurangzeb defeated his brothers. He killed Dara Shikoh and another of his brothers fled the country to save his life. The third brother was imprisoned by Aurangzeb at Agra. Shah Jahan also was imprisoned at that place by his son Aurangzeb.

After thus disposing of his father and brothers, Aurangzeb became the Emperor of Delhi. He got rid of all his opponents most mercilessly and thoroughly. By such acts he made it clear that he was a clever, cruel, crafty and callous man with an iron will. It was clear to all that he could not tolerate any opposition in any form, from any quarter whatsoever.

In religious matters he was harder than even his father and grandfather had been. He was extremely fanatical. He was a Sunni Muslim. He had come to believe that his own religion was the only true religion. All who professed other religions were considered by him to be *Kafir* or infidels. He considered himself to be God's Deputy on earth. He made up his mind that the Islam of his conception should be the

only religion in his empire. He wanted all his subjects to be Sunni Muslims. He aimed at establishing an orthodox Sunni Muslim State.

Among the Muslims, there were many who were pious and liberal-minded. They were Shias and Sufis. They did not hate non-Muslims. They wanted to be friends with them, to live at peace with them. Aurangzeb did not like such pious, liberal-minded Muslims. He had them all murdered in cold blood.

At the same time, he started a ruthless campaign to Muslimize the Hindus. Strict orders were given to the governors and officers all over the empire to do their utmost to make the Hindus embrace Islam. Those who agreed to become Muslims, were given many facilities, favours and concessions. Those who did not, were subjected to many forms of hardship and harassment, not only by government officers, but also by their Muslim neighbours. Very hard, indeed, was the Hindus' lot in those days !

Guru Tegh Bahadur took up his duties as the ninth Guru of the Sikhs in March 1665, that is, about seven years after Aurangzeb had managed to occupy the throne of Delhi. It was, thus, in the reign of this fanatic, bigoted, and callous-hearted monarch that Guru Tegh Bahadur had to carry on his work. This was to prepare the people to face all oppression and persecution with fearless, dauntless courage and steadfast boldness. It was to urge them to hold their faith and honour far more dear and precious than life; to be ever ready to give up life, and refuse to give up their *dharma*. It was to develop in them a sense of their rights as human beings. It was to arouse in them a longing and an urge to claim and assert these rights.

Soon after taking up his duties as the ninth Guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur founded Sri Anandpur. The land needed for the purpose was purchased from the Raja of Kahlur. Then he decided to undertake an extensive missionary tour of the

eastern provinces of India. This tour lasted from 1665 to 1670. His aim, of course, was to preach his faith and ideals. He visited important cities like Agra, Allahabad, Banaras, Gaya, and Patna. Then, leaving his family at Patna, he moved onwards through Monghyr to Dacca. From there he carried out extensive tours of that province. He spent about two years working there. Then he went to the north and preached his mission among the Assamese.

In Assam the Guru met Raja Ram Singh Kachhawa of Amber (Jaipur), son of Mirza Raja Jai Singh in the beginning of the year 1668. You have read about the latter in an earlier book. He had been a great admirer of the Sikh Gurus. It was he who had invited Guru Harkrishan to Delhi and treated him as his honoured guest. Like his father, Raja Ram Singh was an admirer of the Sikh Guru. He had gone to Assam to lead a military campaign against the Assamese on behalf of Emperor Aurangzeb. The Guru was eager to prevent bloodshed. He managed to bring the two parties together for negotiations. He was able to bring about understanding and peace between them. This was effected at a place named Dhubri on the right bank of the river Brahmputra. At that spot a high 'Mound of Peace' was raised by soldiers of the two armies, working together and using their shields to carry the earth which they needed. Near that mound stands a gurdwara called Damdama Sahib.

It was during this period when the Guru was touring the eastern provinces of India, that there occurred a marked and lamentable change for the worse in Aurangzeb's policy towards the Hindus. He adopted a much severer attitude towards them. On April 8, 1669, he issued orders to the governors of all provinces to destroy with a willing hand the schools and temples of the 'infidels'. They were strictly enjoined to put an entire stop to the teaching of idolatrous forms of worship.

Most of the 'infidels' in Aurangzeb's empire were

Hindus so they became the chief targets of this anti-infidel campaign. The Sikhs were not given to any form of idolatrous worship. But to the Muslim rulers all dissent from their religion was intolerable; it was *kufar*. Hence to them even the Sikhs were 'infidels'. The Sikhs therefore, could not expect, nor did they get, a different treatment. They, too, had their share of attention from the Emperor's governors and their officers.

As we know, in most towns and cities there were representatives of the Guru. They were called *masands*. They preached the Sikh faith. They also received, on the Guru's behalf, the offerings made by the Sikhs of their localities. These offerings they took to the Guru once a year. Emperor Aurangzeb ordered that the *masands* be expelled from the towns and cities. He also ordered that the Sikhs' places of worship, gurdwaras, be destroyed. Quite a number of gurdwaras were demolished. Mosques were raised on their sites.

Guru Tegh Bahadur was at this time in Assam. It was there that he heard of the change for the worse in Aurangzeb's policy of religious persecution of the non-Muslims, including the Sikhs. As a result of the Emperor's changed religious policy, the Hindus and Sikhs were passing through terrible times. Guru Tegh Bahadur had come to be generally looked upon as *Hind Ki Chadar* or Champion of the Hindus. He was also head of the Sikh religion, the Guru of the Sikhs. How could he stay away from his people, when they were in great distress ! He felt that his place was among them and with them. So leaving his family at Patna, he rushed back to the Punjab. The year was 1670. When he reached his people, he inspired them, encouraged and consoled them with his discourses, exhortations, and Divine Songs. He taught them to strike fear in none to be afraid of no one and fear nothing.

The Guru felt that he should not stay in his headquarters

in Anandpur. 'I must be among my people,' he said to himself. 'I must visit them. I must go about from place to place, telling my people to prepare themselves for what is coming, and coming very soon; to shed fear and weakness; to face and oppose the tyrants with all their might.'

Accordingly, he undertook an extensive whirlwind tour of the Malwa and the southern part of the country. In this tour he visited countless places and addressed countless people. Sikhs from all over the country flocked to see and hear him. There was always a large assembly of his followers and disciples at his congregations. They made considerable offerings to the Guru. As he had returned to the Panjab after over five years, the gatherings at his *diwans* (congregations) were unusually large. The offerings of *bhet* made by them to the Guru was also unusually large. As he moved from place to place, he was always accompanied by a large number of Sikhs and other visitors.

Everywhere, he said to the people, 'You know what the Mughals are doing. The Great Mughal, Aurangzeb, wants the Islam of his conception to be the only religion professed and practised in his empire; so that all his subjects should be Sunni Muslims. He wants all non-Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs, to choose between Islam and death. Soon you may have to make that choice. Get ready to suffer for your faith. Take a vow that you will give up your life, but will not give up your *dharma*. Prepare yourselves to face and fight the tyrants in defence of your *dharma*. God will help you. The Emperor will, I feel, turn his attention to me. He will deal with me as his grandfather, Jahangir, dealt with my grandfather, Guru Arjan Dev. His treatment of me might even be more cruel and fierce. He will issue orders for my arrest. He will tell me to choose between Islam and death. You need not be told what choice I shall make. He will then have me murdered. That is certain to happen. But don't feel dejected or downcast. I feel that the path of peaceful activity and suffering will have to be given up. It will have to be

abandoned. You know that after Guru Arjan Dev's martyrdom, my father, Guru Har Gobind, had to change the Sikhs from saints to saint-soldiers, from peaceful devotees of God to God-fearing warriors. Similarly, after my death, my son, your next Guru, will take up arms. He will be a great warrior. He will raise a powerful army of saint-warriors. He will change jackals into lions, sparrows into hawks. Get ready for that change. Get ready to muster strongly under his leadership and to shake the Mughal empire to its roots. I shall watch and bless you from above.'

As we mentioned before, in April 1669 Aurangzeb had issued special and strict orders to the governors of all provinces to destroy the schools and temples of the 'infidels', to stop the teaching and practice of their religion. The orders were carried out with fanatic vigour and zeal.

Guru Tegh Bahadur had returned from his tour of the east and north-east in 1670. Because of the Emperor's orders, the royal reporters and newswriters began to pay closer attention to the activities of the Guru on his return to the Panjab. The royal reporters reported to the Emperor that Guru Tegh Bahadur had become a man of great influence. 'For years by now,' they reported, 'he has been conducting an extensive whirlwind tour of the country. He has been going about with many thousand men. He is also collecting funds. With the increase in the number of his followers and financial resources, he might raise the standard of rebellion.

Now, at that time, Aurangzeb was encamped at Hasan Abdal. He had gone there to quell the rebellion of the Pathans on the north-western frontier of his empire. He had left Delhi on April 7 and reached Hasan Abdal on June 1674. It was there that he received the royal reporters' reports against the Guru. He was then busy quelling the Pathans' rebellion. He had no time to make intensive enquiries about allegations. Indeed, he did not have even the inclination to make any such enquiries. He was already

suspicious of the Sikh movement to which his grandfather had tried to put an end. He himself also wanted to suppress it. But he was then busy at Hasan Abdal. Though his fears were aroused by the reports, yet he took no immediate action. Then he received another report against the Guru. Thereupon he decided to strike, to end the Guru's life and activities.

The governors of all provinces were busy taking action in accordance with the Emperor's orders of April 1669. The governor of Kashmir was doing the same. In 1671, Nawab Saif Khan, governor of Kashmir, was transferred and his place was taken by Nawab Iftikhar Khan. The new governor was an enthusiastic exponent and executor of the Emperor's policy. He chose to be specially active in this matter. He called upon the Hindus of Kashmir to choose between Islàm and death. Those who refused to give up their faith were put to the sword. The number of such nameless martyrs was several thousand. Then he turned his attention to the Brahmans of his province. He was very severe with them. He subjected them to the utmost tyranny. He told them of the Emperor's orders. He told them to choose between Islam and death. They were further told to make their choice without delay. They said, 'Give us six months' time to consider the matter.' He acceded to their request.

The people and Pandits of Kashmir offered special prayers to their gods and goddesses. But all was in vain. In their extreme distress, the Pandits decided to seek Guru Tegh Bahadur's advice and help. The Guru had completed his tour and had returned to Sri Anandpur. Accordingly, a sixteen-man deputation of the Brahmans of Kashmir waited upon the Guru at Sri Anandpur. Their leader was Pandit Kirpa Ram Datt of Muttan. He had known the Guru for some time as the tutor of his young son, Sri Gobind Rai, at Anandpur. The deputation arrived at Anandpur on May 25, 1675. The Pandits told the Guru of what they had suffered and what more was in store for them. They added, 'Our lot has become unbearable. You are rightly known as *Hind Ki*

Chadar, Champion of the Hindus. We have been given six months' time in which to make our choice between Islam and death. That period is about to end. We have not been able to decide this way or that. We have come to you for help, guidance, and protection, O Champion of the Hindus.'

The Pandits' woeful tale plunged the Guru into deep and anxious thought. He thought to himself, thousands of people have to make the same choice. Things are becoming intolerable. Something should be done to set them right. But what should it be ?"

Guru Tegh Bahadur sat silent lost in thought. At that time his son, Sri Gobind Rai, came in and sat on his lap. He did not receive the usual caresses from his father. He looked in the latter's face. He discovered that his father was absorbed in some deep and anxious thought. Then he looked at the Pandits standing before the Guru. He noticed their long faces and downcast eyes. He felt convinced that the Guru's concern was about these persons.

'What is it, dear Papa ?' asked he in his charming Bihari accent. 'Why is your ever calm and bright face furrowed with care and clouded with gloom ? What are you pondering over so deeply and anxiously ? What have these good people been telling you ? They seem to be plunged in some woe. What is the matter ?'

The Guru replied, 'These good people are Pandits of Kashmir. Their governor has told them to choose between Islam and death. They don't want to choose either of the two. They were given six months' time in which to make up their minds. That time-limit is about to expire. They have come to me for help and advice.

'The problem before me is very tough. The times are hard, very hard. But still harder times are soon to come. The Mughal rulers are making all-out efforts to convert all their subjects to Islam. To achieve that object, they are behaving

like fierce wild beasts. Their conscience is dead. Their hearts have become frozen and stony. Something has to be done to melt and soften their hearts, to bring back to them their lost human nature, and to revive their conscience. On the other hand, the Hindus have lost all sense of dignity and self-respect. They seem to have become dead. They bear everything most meekly, without even a whispered protest. They are spiritually dead. Something has to be done to re-inspire them with life, courage and human dignity, to put new life into their dead bones.

'This two-fold task must be performed without delay. The first task is that of melting the ruler's stony, frozen hearts, and filling them with fear of God, love for man, and human sympathy. The second task is that of infusing life, courage, and a sense of self-respect in the Hindus, and arousing in them the courage to do and dare. They have to be taught to claim and assert their human rights.

'There seems to be only one way to achieve all this. Some great holy man should throw himself before the beastly tyrants and challenge them to do their worst. The sight of suffering bravely borne by such a one, might give them a shock and a shaking. Their dead human nature might come back to life. Their hearts might begin to throb with human sympathy. On the other hand, the same sight will produce a strong stir and indignation among the non-Muslims. They will realize the need of ending the tyranny of these bigoted rulers. They will begin to think how to make themselves free from the beastly tyrants' yoke. But how and where to find such a holy man ? That is the problem which has made me sad and lost in thought, my dear.'

Sri Gobind Rai, who was hardly eight years old, said, 'For that sacrifice, dear father, who can be worthier than you ?' On hearing this, Guru Tegh Bahadur felt satisfied that his son would be a worthy successor to him. He felt sure that Sri Gobind Rai would prove equal to the task before him.

The task was that of leading his people through the difficult times that were soon to come. Accordingly, he told the Pandits to go and tell the governor, 'Guru Tegh Bahadur is our leader and guide. First make him a Muslim. Then we shall follow his example. We shall adopt your faith of our own accord.'

The Kashmiri Pandits thanked the Guru for his sympathy, guidance, and promise to sacrifice himself in order to save them. They went to the governor. They said to him what the Guru had advised them to do. The governor promptly reported the whole matter to the Emperor at Hasan Abdal, and sought his further orders. Emperor Aurangzeb was filled with rage on getting the governor's report. His own reporters also sent a similar report. They told him of the Guru's sympathetic response to the Brahmans' appeal; of his readiness to lay down his life in their cause. The Emperor burst out, 'He has dared to express sympathy with the infidel Brahmans of Kashmir. His conduct is an open affront to me and my policy regarding the infidels. I cannot brook it. He must suffer for it; he must die for it.'

He at once issued an order to the governor of Lahore to have the Guru arrested, fettered, and detained in prison. Further orders about him, he added, would be given on receiving a report that the first order had been carried out. The governor of Lahore passed on the Emperor's order to the *Faujdar* of Sarhind, Dilawar Khan; for Sri Anandpur was within his jurisdiction. The latter, in turn, asked the circle *Kotwal* of Ropar, Noor Mohammad Khan Mirza, to arrest the Guru; for Sri Anandpur lay in his immediate jurisdiction.

The Emperor's orders for the Guru's arrest were kept secret. The *Kotwal* feared that if the order got out the Guru's followers and admirers might create trouble. He wanted to wait for a suitable opportunity to effect the arrest without any fuss and difficulty. He did not have to wait long for that opportunity. The Guru, accompanied by a few followers, left

Anandpur for another tour. He did so on July 11, 1675. He soon arrived at the village of Malikpur Rangharan near Ropar. He wanted to cross the river Satluj for his onward journey. At that village he stayed in the house of a Sikh named Dargahia or Nigahia.

The *Kotwal* had deputed special police informers to watch and report the Guru's movements. They informed him of the Guru's arrival at Malikpur Rangharan along with a few Sikhs. He hurried to the spot at once. The Jats of the village got news that the Kotwal had come to arrest the Guru. They came out in a body to oppose the arrest. But with the help of the local Ranghars and a strong force of additional police, the *Kotwal* was able to arrest the Guru and his companions. This happened on July 12, 1675.

The *Kotwal*, Noor Mohammad Khan Mirza, sent the Guru to Sarhind. The *Faujdar* of Sarhind, Dilawar Khan, reported the Guru's arrest to the Imperial headquarters and sought further orders. The Guru was kept at Sarhind for some three months and a half, fettered, chained, and detained in prison. Then a *parwana* was received from the Imperial headquarters. As required therein, the Guru was despatched to Delhi, shut up in an iron cage. He reached there on November 5, 1675. The Emperor was informed accordingly, and his further orders were sought about what was to be done to the Guru. He was kept in an iron cage, fettered and chained. Nobody was allowed to meet him.

In the meanwhile, the *Subedar* and the royal Qazi did their utmost to persuade the Guru to be converted to Islam. Finding him unwilling to do so, they tortured him most cruelly for five days with a view to coercing him to agree to their proposal. But he was adamant as a rock. Nothing could shake him and make him agree 'to abjure his faith or perjure his soul to preserve his muddy vesture of decay'. He remained firm and perfectly calm. He was willing to lay down his life rather than to give up his faith. His tortures were

made more and more severe and cruel still. But they failed to shake him. On November 11, 1675, they killed his companions before his very eyes. Bhai Mati Das was bound between two pillars and cut down with a saw. Bhai Dayal Das was boiled to death in a cauldron of boiling water. Bhai Sati Das was roasted alive with oilsoaked cotton wrapped round his body. Thus did the Guru's companions sacrifice their lives for their faith, with God's Name on their lips, and their eyes fixed on the Guru's face.

By then the Emperor's order had been received about what was to be done to the Guru. It said, 'Tell him that if he claims to be a true prophet sent by God to preach a religion, he should show some miracles in support of his claim. If he does not or cannot show any miracle, he should be told to accept Islam. If he refuses to do that, he should be executed.'

The Emperor's men informed the Guru of the choice offered to him by the Emperor. The Guru replied, 'True men of God never perform miracles in order to save themselves from suffering or hardship. They do not perform miracles to prove their greatness, either. I will not show any miracles. I will not accept Islam. Do with me as you like. I would prefer to lay down my life in sympathy with the oppressed and helpless Brahmans of Kashmir.'

After the Guru had thus announced his decision about the choices offered by the Emperor, he was led out of his cage to an open space near Chandni Chowk. He was allowed to bathe at a well nearby. After bathing, the Guru went and sat under a banyan tree. The executioner stood near him with his drawn sword. The Guru said to him, 'When I conclude my prayers, I shall bow to God. Do your work at that moment.' The Guru began to recite *Japji*. Then he offered prayers to God and bowed to Him. The executioner cut off the Guru's head with his sword. This occurred on the 11th of November, 1675 A.D. A large crowd had appeared there to witness the execution. At the place where Guru Tegh

Bahadur was beheaded, stands the magnificent gurdwara named Sis Ganj.

The Guru's body was publicly exposed in the streets of Delhi, to serve as a warning to the 'infidels'. It was announced that nobody was permitted to remove the Guru's dead body. Strong guards were posted to prevent its being taken away.

However, a daring Ranghreta Sikh, named Bhai Jaita, belonging to the sweeper class, managed to take possession of the Guru's head. Concealing it in a bag he hurried with it to Anandpur. There he presented it to the Guru's son. Guru Gobind Singh, who was yet a mere child, was deeply affected at the extreme devotion of the Ranghreta. He flung his arms round Bhai Jaita's neck and declared, '*Ranghrete Guru Ke Bete*' (Ranghretas are the Guru's own sons). The head was then cremated with due rites. At the place of its cremation stands a gurdwara named Sis Ganj, Anandpur.

A severe, blinding dust-storm began to blow on the following day. A daring, devoted Lubana Sikh, named Lakhi Shah, decided to take advantage of the storm. Along with some of his tribesmen, he loaded cotton on to some carts and drove them towards the place where the Guru's body lay. He managed to take up the body and load it on a cart. Thus loaded and concealed, the Guru's body was taken to the Lubanas' huts outside the city. Lakhi Shah placed it in his own hut. He made a heap of firewood in his hut. He placed the Guru's body on that heap. He covered it with more firewood. He then set fire to his hut. He made it known that his hut had caught fire by accident. His hut and a few others were reduced to ashes. Thus it was that the Guru's body was cremated by Lakhi Shah and his companions. They all then said prayers and thanked the Lord for His having helped them in performing their sacred duty.

A grand gurdwara, named Rakab Ganj, stands at the

place were Guru Tegh Bahadur's headless body was cremated.

Aurangzeb's orders were thus carried out. Guru Tegh Bahadur, 'Champion of the Hindus' was executed. Thus did the Guru "gain martyrdom which stands unparalleled in the history of the world. It is true that there have been, in the past and since then, innumerable martyrs who had, or have, died for their faiths or in defence of their countries. But, Guru Tegh Bahadur died for the freedom of conscience and conviction of people belonging to a faith other than his own. He did not believe in Brahmanism. In fact, the Guru's Sikh faith had discarded the Brahmanical ways of life. Yet, he stood for their freedom of belief as God-created human beings, in opposition to the narrow sectarianism of the power-mad Mughal autocrat who wished to coerce his subjects into his own way of thinking. This to Guru Tegh Bahadur was against the spirit of humanism and human equality for which he stood and sacrificed his life." (Dr Ganda Singh)

Guru Tegh Bahadur was executed. But he is not dead. He can never die. What was mortal of him, his body of flesh and bones, of course, disappeared from mortals' eyes of flesh. But he lives, and shall ever live, in the hearts of all who value the noble, lofty, principles which he preached and practised, and for which he died. He lives, and shall ever live with us in the hundreds of soul-inspiring Sacred Songs which he composed and sang. He lives, and shall ever live, in the hearts of millions and millions of his devout followers and admirers.

According to a prominent Hindu historian, Guru Tegh Bahadur's 'execution was universally regarded by Hindus as a sacrifice for their faith'. They felt grateful to the Guru for what he did for them. As long, therefore, as this feeling of gratitude lives in their hearts, so long will Guru Tegh Bahadur, Champion of the Hindus, be alive for them.

One immediate result of the Guru's death was significant and wholesome. We know that Aurangzeb was burning with zeal to convert all Hindus to Islam. The fire of indignation and revenge cooled the fire of his fanatic zeal. The Hindus were allowed to live on in his empire. But for that change, they would all have been made to become Muslims. The Hindus in India are a living monument of what the Guru did for their faith. They live because he died for their sake.

One thing more. The spirit of Guru Tegh Bahadur passed on into the body of his son, Guru Gobind Singh. The latter was gifted with unique practical wisdom and foresight. He made a note of the fire of 'indignation and revenge'. He took effective steps to harness these sentiments. He decided to direct them into effective channels. He created a whole community of saint-warriors. The fire of 'indignation and revenge' was alive in them. The spirit which he got from his martyred father he passed on to his *Khalsa*. The *Khalsa* destroyed the tyrants who had been forcing their religion on others. Their empire was gone. That was another consequence of Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom. It altered the whole course of the subsequent history of the land. As another prominent Hindu historian writes :

'Few religious executions had such far-reaching consequences as that of the Sikh Guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur, which exercised a decisive influence on the subsequent history of the Punjab'.

Thus, we see that even after his execution, Guru Tegh Bahadur's spirit and personality have continued to live and work among us. He has made unique and wonderful achievements. Who can say that he is dead ? He lives still and shall ever live. His murderers are no more.

3
BHAIS MATI DAS, DIAL DAS AND SATI DAS

Bhai Mati Das

Bhai Mati Das came from a Brahman family of village Kariala in the district of Jhelum (Pakistan). He was the eldest son of Bhai Praga. His grandfather, Mahatma Gautam Das, used to be a deeply religious man of a noble, saintly character. He was loved and respected by all, Hindus and Muslims alike.

Bhai Praga was a strong stalwart. He had the body and the strength of a giant. He embraced the Sikh faith during Guru Har Gobind's time. He lived the life of a true Sikh. His life was a model for others. He was a prominent saint-soldier of Guru Har Gobind's. He took a hero's part in Guru Har Gobind's battles. He had four sons :— Bhais Mati Das, Sati Das, Jati Das and Sakhi Das.

Bhai Mati Das was a strongly built as his father, Bhai Praga. He was a dear, devout disciple of Guru Tegh Bahadur. He actually practised what he believed and professed. Guru Tegh Bahadur made him his *diwan.* He had to look after the income and expenditure of the Guru's *darbar.*

Along with the Guru, Bhai Mati Das was also arrested, chained, and imprisoned. Under Emperor Aurangzeb's orders, Guru Tegh Bahadur was to be beheaded. The qazis decided to torture and kill the Guru's companions before his eyes. They thought, 'The sight of their suffering and fate might shake his resolve. He might be inclined to save himself by agreeing to our proposal. He might embrace Islam.'

So, they picked out Bhai Mati Das first of all. He was led out in chains to Chandni Chowk under a heavy guard. He was calm. His face beamed with glory. His gait was a mighty hero's swagger. He walked like a superior among inferiors. His whole bearing showed wonderful self-confidence and self-satisfaction.

A large crowd had gathered already in Chandni Chowk. Bhai Mati Das was brought there under a heavy guard. A number of qazis accompanied him. They were apparently saying something to him. But he neither listened nor heard. His mind was wholly fixed on God. He was eager to meet Him. All eyes were fixed on him. No eyes were dry. All observers were filled with reverence and admiration for that tall, strong, calm, and holy man of God. They shuddered at the thought of what was about to happen to him.

The spot fixed for his execution was reached. The guard and the qazis halted, with Bhai Mati Das in their midst. The Chief Qazi then said to Bhai Mati Das, 'O brave young man, be wise. This is my last appeal to your common-sense. Why throw away your youthful life and all the joys it may bring ? Accept Islam, and be one of the ruling class. You will have wealth and high position. You will enjoy a life of peace, plenty and pleasure. When you die, Prophet Muhammad will receive you among the faithful. You will be led into Paradise. You will live there forever among pleasures of all kinds. If you refuse to accept all these good things of this world and the next, you will be killed with torture. So, be wise. Make a wise choice.'

Bhai Mati Das replied, 'Why waste your time and breath ? I prefer dying to giving up my faith. Be quick.'

The qazis said, 'All right, let it be as you desire. But have you any last wish which you would like to be fulfilled before you are killed ?'

Bhai Mati Das said, 'Yes. Stand me with my face

towards my Guru. In that way I shall behold him to the last moment of my life here.'

His wish was granted. He was made to stand with his face towards the Guru. He was tightly tied between two erect flat logs of wood. A saw was placed on his head. Each end of it was held by a fierce looking Pathan. The saw began to move to and fro. Blood began to flow down Bhai Mati Das's face and neck. He did not utter any cry of pain. His face showed no sign of suffering. He was calmly repeating the *Japji*. His body was sawn into two. His devout, brave soul reached the bosom of the kind and loving Father of all.

Bhai Mati Das has not died. He still lives in the hearts of those who worship goodness, who admire nobility. He lives in the minds of those who lead a spiritual life. He is the inspiration of those who prefer the soul to the body; who, in order to save their soul, to keep in pure and unsullied, would gladly sacrifice the body and all its pleasures. He is the

motivation of those who place duty before self. He is the hero of all who work for noble objectives, not for rewards or recognition.

Bhai Dial Das

Bhai Dial Das was another of the Sikhs who had been arrested along with Guru Tegh Bahadur, and taken to Delhi. He was a son of Bhai Mati Das, a resident of village Alipur, near Multan, Pakistan. His grandfather, Bhai Balu, had fought like a hero in the first Sikh battle against the Mughals in 1628 A.D. He had ten brothers, all of whom were devoted Sikhs and gallant warriors. They all achieved martyrdom in serving the Guru.

Like his companions, Bhai Dial Das, was also arrested, chained, and imprisoned in the Kotwali at Delhi. After having martyred Bhai Mati Das, the qazis turned to Bhai Dial Das. They led him to the spot where Bhai Mati Das had been sawn into two. He was told to see what had happened to

his companion. He was advised to be wiser. He was told of the joys and pleasures he could enjoy by accepting Islam. He was told what would happen to him if he refused to become a Muslim.

Bhai Dial Das heard all this. He did not feel nervous or afraid. He remained firm in his resolve. Then he said, 'My misguided friends, do you think that you have killed my brother, Bhai Mati Das ? You are mistaken. You have not killed him. You have given him ever-lasting life. He has become immortal. He will live for ever in the hearts of men. He will be a source of inspiration to others. Many like him will rise and follow his example. A time will come when you and your Emperor will be no more, but Bhai Mati Das will be yet alive. I will not give up my faith. The pleasures with which you offer have no charm for me. The tortures which you threaten me have no terrors for me. Be quick. Send me to where my brother, Bhai Mati Das, has gone to live for ever in the lap of the Lord.'

'All right,' said the Chief Qazi, 'be ready.' He was seated in a large boiling vessel. It was filled with water. Then they lit fire under it. They went on heating it from below. The water began to boil. Bhai Dial Das was calm and cool all this while. He sat in the boiling water with no sign of suffering on his face. He did not give out even the faintest cry of pain. He went on repeating the Guru's hymns. This went on until his soul left his body to join Bhai Mati Das.

Bhai Sati Das

Bhai Sati Das was a brother of Bhai Mati Das, who had been the first to be martyred on that day. After putting Bhai Dial Das to death, Aurangzeb's men took out Bhai Sati Das from the prison. He was told to see what had happened to his two companions. 'If you don't want to suffer what they have suffered,' they said, 'give up your *kufar* or false faith, and embrace Islam, the only faith acceptable to God. Be wise,

make a wise choice. If you embrace Islam, you will be given a high position and plenty of pleasures. Make up your mind.'

Bhai Sati Das was firm as a rock in his resolve. He told the qazi and his men that he was eager to join his martyred companions. Under the qazi's orders, Bhai Sati Das was wrapped in cotton, which was then soaked in oil. Thus wrapped, he was burnt to death. All the time he was calm and cheerful, and continued reciting the Guru's hymns. This happened on 11th November, 1675. Such heroic souls never die. They live for all times as sublime as ever. Throughout the ages they stand like light-houses in the waves, guiding humanity through storms. They are the inspiration of the soul for the rising generation.

It behoves us to ever remember such heroes; to preserve and pursue, in our life and practice, the noble principles for which they laid down their lives. We should be firm and sincere in our faith. We should prefer a life of spiritual joys to a life of flesh and fleshy pleasures.

4

THE BELOVED FIVE

On the Baisakhi day of the year 1699 A.D., Guru Gobind Singh held a big gathering at Anandpur. It was held at the place where now stands the gurdwara named Kesgarh. After the morning service, he stood up, drew his sword, and said aloud, 'Is there anyone here ready to lay down his life at my call ? This sword of mine is crying for the blood of a dear Sikh of mine.'

At this call, the whole assembly was filled with terror and amazement. The Guru went on repeating his demand for the head of a dear Sikh. At the third call, Bhai Daya Ram got up and offered his head. The Guru pulled him into a tent nearby. The sound of a blow, as of a sword cutting off a man's head, was heard from inside the tent. A stream of blood flowed out of the tent. The Guru came out. He waved his sword dripping with blood. He called for another Sikh's head. At this Bhai Dharm Das stood up and offered his head to the Guru. He was taken into the tent. Again the sounds of a sword-blow and a body falling to the ground were heard from inside the tent. A fresh stream of blood was seen to come out. In the same way, three other Sikhs stood up, one after another, and offered their heads to the Guru. They were—Bhai Mukham Chand, Bhai Himmat Rai, and Bhai Sahib Chand.

Then, dressing the five in handsome new clothes, the Guru brought them before the assembly. He then baptized them with his *amrit*—sweetened water stirred with a two-edged sword called *Khanda*. He called them his Beloved Five. He made their names end in 'Singh'. They became :

Bhai Daya Singh, Bhai Dharm Singh, Bhai Mukham Singh, Bhai Himmat Singh, and Bhai Sahib Singh.

Then the Guru desired his Beloved Five to prepare *amrit* or nectar in the same way as he had done. They obeyed. When it was ready, he stood up before them with folded hands and said. 'Now, my Dear Ones, baptize me as I have baptized you. Make me a Singh as I have made you Singhs. Don't feel puzzled. Don't hesitate. My Dear Ones, you are my Guru. I am your *Chela* (disciple). O my Guru, grant my request.'

They obeyed. They baptized him as he had baptized them. He thanked them and said, 'Now my name is not Gobind Rai, but Gobind Singh.'

Having offered their heads to the Guru in response to his amazing call, they became martyrs. From that day they were living martyrs. They became his, body and soul. They remained with him to the end of their earthly lives.

Their names have become immortal. They will be remembered as long as the Sikh community lasts. They are remembered daily, morning and evening, in every place where a Sikh lives. Every time a sikh recites the Sikh prayer, he repeats their names. Every time *Karah Parshad* is distributed in a Sikh congregation, their share is taken out before distribution among the persons present there.

Not much is known about the early lives of the Beloved Five. What is known about them is given in brief below.

Bhai Daya Singh

Bhai Daya Singh was a son of Sri Sudha, a Khatri of Lahore. His mother's name was Srimati Diali. He was born in 1669 A.D. So he was aged about thirty on the day when he qualified to be the first of the Beloved Five. After taking *amrit*, he became Bhai Daya Singh. He was appointed the

leader of the Beloved Five. As we shall see, he was the youngest of the Five Beloved Ones.

He accompanied the Guru to the end of his life. He took a heroic part in the Guru's wars. In December 1704, the Guru was prevailed upon by the Beloved Five to leave Chamkaur Sahib. Bhai Daya Singh was assigned the duty of accompanying the Guru. It was Bhai Daya Singh who took the Guru's letter called the *Zafarnama* to Aurangzeb. The Emperor was then in the Deccan. The journey was difficult, risky, and long. On going through the letter the Emperor was visibly moved. He appeared to be nervous and agitated. He became irritated and angry. He addressed hard and angry words to the Guru's Dear One. But the latter stood calm and unafraid. He then said, 'O Emperor, just think of the cruel, inhuman wrongs that you and your men have done to the Guru. In spite of all that, he has taken the courage to write to you and to give you sound advice. He has tried to reveal yourself to you, to make you see what you are in your Prophet's eyes, to make you realize how your actions contradict your professions. He occupies the throne of Baba Nanak, before whom your ancestor, Emperor Babar, bowed and prayed for blessings. He has the power to make and unmake kings; for he is ever in tune with the Almighty Father. You will be well advised to seek his friendship. You, too, should seek his blessings. He can give you what your great conquests and your wide empire have failed to give you. He will give you peace of mind. I feel that it is peace of mind that you now need more than anything else. If you go and see him, he will extend his love and kindness to you. He will forget and forgive all the wrongs done to him. He is as forgiving and kind as God; for God dwells in him and he ever lives in God.'

Bhai Daya Singh's conduct was like bearding the lion in his own den. You know he was one of Guru Gobind Singh's lions. His words softened the Emperor. He said, 'The Guru's letter and your words have opened my eyes. I now realize

that I have done him much wrong. I now realize that he is a dear one of Almighty Allah. I am nearing the end of my life's journey. I shall soon have to render an account of my doings. I shudder to think what the verdict of the Great, All-knowing, All-loving Judge will be. The Guru can help me. He has invited me to see him. I long to see him. But I am sick, perhaps on my death-bed. I cannot go to him. Go back to him and request him to see me. He has promised to do so in this letter.'

The Emperor then ordered his men to treat Bhai Daya Singh with kindness and honour. He himself conferred a robe of honour on the Guru's bold and fearless messenger. For his return journey, he gave him a *parwana* (chit) of safe conduct. It was an order to his officials on the way back to see that the holder was well treated, and that no harm of any kind should be done to him. Because of that royal chit, Bhai Daya Singh could travel safely and more quickly. On reaching the Guru's presence, he delivered to him the Emperor's message. To that he added his own recommendation. The Guru agreed to see the ailing monarch.

Bhai Daya Singh accompanied the Guru to Nander in the Deccan. He continued to serve him with utmost affection and devotion. He died there in 1708 A.D.

Bhai Dharam Singh

Bhai Dharam Das was the second of the five Sikhs who offered their heads to Guru Gobind Singh on the Baisakhi day of 1699 A.D. He was born at Hastinapur or Delhi in the year 1666 A.D. So, he was aged about thirty-three on that day. His father's name was Sri Sant Ram. He was a Jat by caste. His mother's name was Srimati Sabho. On taking *amrit*, he became Bhai Dharam Singh. He accompanied the Guru to the end of his life. He took a hero's part in Guru Gobind Singh's wars. When the Guru was prevailed upon to leave Chamkaur Sahib in December 1704, the Beloved Five

there assigned Bhai Dharam Singh the duty of going with the Guru. He accompanied the Guru to Nander, Deccan. He served him with utmost affection and devotion. He died there in 1708 A.D. Some people, however, say that he died fighting at Chamkaur Sahib.

Bhai Mukham Singh

Bhai Muhkam Chand was the third Sikh who offered his head to Guru Gobind Singh on the Baisakhi day of 1699 A.D. He was born in the year 1663 A.D. Hence he was about thirty-six years old on that historic day. His father's name was Sri Tirath Ram, a washerman of Dwarka. His mother's name was Srimati Devan Bai. On taking *amrit*, he became Bhai Muhkam Singh. Thereafter he remained with the Guru. He played a heroic part in Guru Gobind Singh's wars. He died fighting at Chamkaur Sahib on December 22, 1704.

Bhai Sahib Singh

Bhai Sahib Chand was the fourth to qualify himself for being one of Guru Gobind Singh's Beloved Five. He was born to Sri Chamna, a barber of Bidar, in the year 1662 A.D. He was thus about thirty-seven years old on that historic day. His mother's name was Srimati Sona Bai. On taking *amrit* he became Bhai Sahib Singh. He remained with the Guru to the last. He served the Guru with utmost affection and devotion. He fought heroically in the Guru's wars. He died fighting at Chamkaur Sahib on December 22, 1704.

Bhai Himmat Singh

Bhai Himmat Rai was the fifth Sikh to offer his head to Guru Gobind Singh on the Baisakhi day of 1699 A.D. His Father, Sri Gulab Rai, was a water-carrier of Jagannath. His mother's name was Srimati Dhanno. He was born in the year

1661 A.D. in Jagannath. He was, thus, about thirty-eight years old on the day of his becoming one of the Beloved Five. On taking *amrit,* he became Bhai Himmat Singh. He remained with the Guru to the end of his life. All along he served the Guru most faithfully and lovingly. He also played a heroic part in the Guru's wars. He died fighting at Chamkaur Sahib on December 22, 1704.

5

BABA AJIT SINGH, BABA JUJHAR SINGH

In ordinary speech the word '*baba*' means 'grandfather' or 'an old man'. Hence, on reading the heading of this story, you might be led to think that it relates to some old men. But that is not the case. When the events narrated below took place, Baba Ajit Singh and Baba Jujhar Singh were in their teens. Then, you might ask, why are they called *Babas* ? The explanation is this. Among the Sikhs the word *Baba* is also applied to one worthy of high respect. It means 'Most Respected.' The sons of the Sikh Gurus were called '*Babas*' from the very beginning of their lives. That is why the word '*Baba*' is applied to Guru Gobind Singh's sons. You have already read about Baba Atal.

Baba Ajit Singh

Baba Ajit Singh was the eldest of the four sons of Guru Gobind Singh. He was born at Anandpur on January 7, 1687 A.D. From his early life he was given the sort of education and training that befitted the saint-soldiers of Guru Gobind Singh. He acquired wonderful proficiency in the use of weapons of war, especially the bow and the arrow. He was also an excellent swordsman.

He was a strong and brave warrior. He began to take part in the Guru's wars very early in life. He performed astonishing feats of bravery on several occasions. No danger or difficulty could ever daunt him. No danger could deter him from his path of duty.

Once a Brahman came to Guru Gobind Singh's *darbar*. He complained that his newly-wedded wife had been taken away by force by some Pathans of Bassi, near Hoshiarpur. Baba Ajit Singh offered to help the Brahman to recover his wife. With a band of young brave Sikhs, Baba Ajit Singh fell upon Bassi during the night. He arrested the Pathans responsible for the wicked deed. He recovered the Brahman's wife. He took the wicked Pathans to Anandpur the following morning. The Brahman's wife was restored to him. The wicked Pathans were punished, suitably and severely.

Years later, Anandpur was besieged by the Mughal armies from Sarhind and Lahore. They were commanded by Nawab Wazir Khan and Nawab Zabardast Khan, respectively. All the hill chiefs, who were Hindus, joined them with their

armies. One day, during the siege, the two commanders of the imperial army sent a messenger to the Guru. He was told to give the following message to him : 'This army is not one belonging to petty hill chiefs. It is that of the great and mighty Emperor Aurangzeb. You will not be able to oppose it for long. You should show respect to the Emperor, give up fighting, and embrace Islam.'

Baba Ajit Singh was standing near the Guru. The messenger's words aroused his anger. He drew his sword and said, 'Shut up. If you utter another word, I shall humble your pride. I will cut off your head from your body. I will cut you to pieces for daring to speak such insolent words before the Guru.'

The messenger said nothing more. He went away, humbled and burning with rage.

The siege of Anandpur caused great hardships to the Guru and his Sikhs. The besiegers were also getting tired. They sent message after message to the Guru. They said, 'Vacate the fort. Go where you like. We swear on the Quran and the cow that you will not be harmed.' The Guru was sure that the oaths were false. He was not in favour of placing any trust in them. But he was prevailed upon, chiefly by his mother, to vacate the fort. He did so during the night of December 20, 1704. As soon as the besiegers realised this, they forgot their oaths and fell upon the Guru's party. Baba Ajit Singh, with a party of Sikhs, held up the enemy, while the rest were crossing the river Sarsa. When all had crossed, he and his party plunged their horses into the flooded river. They soon reached the other bank. The enemy did not have the courage to jump into the fast-flowing ice-cold water of the flooded stream.

After crossing the Sarsa, the Guru hurried towards Chamkaur. He had only forty Sikhs with him, besides his two elder sons. The Mughal army was coming after him. He learnt that another Mughal army lay only a few miles away

ahead of him. He was thus between two large armies. He decided to meet them at Chamkaur. He reached there about sunset. He occupied a mud-house or *haveli*, and began to wait for the enemy.

The Mughal armies arrived during the night. They besieged the mud-house on the following day. They attacked it from all sides. They had to retreat every time after suffering heavy losses. Then they decided to force open the gate. They rushed towards it. A batch of five Sikhs went out to meet them holding their advance as long as possible. The Sikhs fought very bravely. They killed many until at last they were over-powered and slain. Then another batch of five Sikhs went out to meet the enemy and check his advance. This went on for some time. The enemy suffered heavily at the hands of each batch of sikhs.

After a time, Guru Gobind Singh's eldest son, Baba Ajit Singh, asked permission to go out and oppose the enemy. He said, 'Dear father, my name is Ajit or Unconquerable. I will not be conquered. And if conquered, I will not flee or come back alive. Permit me to go, dear father.' He was less than eighteen years of age. The Guru knew what the end of his son would be.

But were not they who had already fallen also his sons ? He hugged and kissed Baba Ajit Singh for the last time. He then bade him go out and seek martyrdom and life everlasting.

Baba Ajit Singh went out. He was accompanied by five Sikhs. At first they poured a rain of arrows on the enemy. He fought like a hero. Soon his stock of arrows was exhausted. He took out his lance and sprang upon the enemy. He was wounded but he fought on as bravely as ever. Baba Ajit Singh thrust his lance into the heart of a Muhammedan soldier. The soldier wore steel armour. The lance got stuck in the armour. Baba Ajit Singh tried to pull it out. It broke in two. He drew his sword and fell upon the enemy. But he was overpowered.

He fell. He was martyred. His soul went to meet his grandfather at the Almighty's *darbar.*

The Guru had been watching his son from the roof of the mud-house. He had admired and rejoiced at the skill, strength, and bravery shown by his son. He had seen him wounded. He saw him fall. He thanked God that his son had met a saint-warrior's death, that he had achieved martyrdom and eternal life.

Baba Jujhar Singh

Baba Jujhar Singh was the second son of Guru Gobind Singh. He was born in March 1689. He, too, had the same training as his elder brother. Like Baba Ajit Singh, he accompanied the Guru to Chamkaur. Baba Jajhar Singh had

also watched his elder brother fighting with the enemy. He had seen him fall. At once he stood before his father with folded hands. He made the same request as his elder brother had done. 'Permit me, dear father,' said he, 'to go where my brother has gone. Don't say that I am too young. I am your son. I am a Singh or Lion of yours. I shall prove worthy of you. I shall die fighting, with my face towards the enemy, with God and the Guru on my lips and in my heart.'

Baba Jujhar Singh was then less than sixteen years of age. The Guru was pleased to hear what he had said. He embraced him. He gave him a sword and a shield. On his turban he planted a small crest, such as bridegrooms wear. 'Go my son,' said he, 'and wed life-giving Death. We have been here for a while. Now we shall return to our real home. Go and wait for me there. Your grandfather and elder brother are already waiting for you.'

The lad of less than sixteen, thus armed, went out with five Sikhs. He fought as bravely and fearlessly as his elder brother had done. Many a mighty warrior fell before the child-warrior. But the odds were too heavily loaded against him. He was overpowered. He died fighting to the last.

The Guru was watching all this. When he saw his son fall, he thanked God that his son had proved a worthy saint-warrior, and achieved martyrdom and life everlasting.

6
BABA ZORAWAR SINGH AND BABA FATEH SINGH

Under Emperor Aurangzeb's orders, the Mughal governors of Lahore and Sarhind, with all their troops, marched against Guru Gobind Singh. They were joined by the Hindu hill-chiefs and the Muhammedan *Ranghars* and *Gujjars* of the locality.

The combined armies besieged Anandpur and cut off all supplies. The Guru and his Sikhs bore the extreme hardships of the long siege with steadfast courage. The besiegers began to despair of success. They sent messengers to the Guru. The messengers said, 'The Mughal governors and the hill-chiefs have sworn on the Quran and the cow that, if you vacate the fort, you will not be harmed in any way. You may go where you like.'

The Guru had no faith in these oaths. So he refused to vacate the fort. But after a time, he was prevailed upon by his mother and others to leave the fort. When he did so, the besiegers forgot their solemn oaths. They fell upon the Guru near the Sarsa river.

In the confusion which followed the fight near the Sarsa, the Guru's mother, Mata Gujri became separated from him and his Sikhs. His two younger sons, Baba Zorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh, were with her. In the biting winter wind of early dawn, she travelled as chance directed her. Her path lay through a thick jungle. Some way off, she met a Brahman named Gangu. He had once been a cook at the Guru's house. His village, Kheri, was nearby. He offered to give her shelter and protection in his house. She decided to take her grandsons with her, and accept shelter and protection offered by Gangu Brahman.

He lodged them in the hinder-most room of his house. When the Guru's mother went to sleep, he stole her saddle-bag which contained her valuables and money. He buried it somewhere in the house. When Mata Gujri woke, she found that the saddle-bag was missing. She questioned the Brahman. He pretended to be furious at this. He said to her, 'So you suspect me ! You think me to be a thief ! This, then, is the return that you propose to make for my service to you ! I saved you from sure death. I exposed myself to grave risks in giving you shelter and protection. The return that you make to me for all this is that you charge me with theft ! You have insulted me. You will suffer for this, O ungrateful lady.'

Mata Gujri tried to calm him. But he refused to listen to what she had to say. He at once went to the Muhammedan Chaudhri of the village. He said to him, 'The Guru's mother and two sons have just come to my house. We can both earn a large reward by delivering them to the imperial authorities.'

The Brahman and the Chaudhri went to the Muhammedan official of Morinda. They reported to him about the Guru's mother and sons. He was glad to hear the news. He went with them to the Brahman's house. He took a band of armed soldiers with him. Mata Gujri and her grandsons were arrested and taken to Nawab Wazir Khan, governor of Sarhind.

Nawab Wazir Khan ordered them to be confined in a tower of his fort. They had to pass the cold December night with the bare, hard floor as their bed. Next day, Wazir Khan ordered the children to be brought before him. Mata Gujri did not wish to part with them. The soldiers, who had come to take them away, tried to calm her and allay her fears. They said, 'The Nawab wants to see them. He will do them no harm. They will be sent back to you.' Mata Gujri still hesitated. Baba Zorawar Singh, the elder of her two grandsons, stood up and said, 'The Turks have ever been our enemies. We are now in their power. How can we escape

from them ? Therefore, let us go and face the governor.' Saying this, he took with him his younger brother, Baba Fateh Singh, and got ready to go. Mata Gujri hugged and kissed them. Then she said, 'Go, dear jewels of mine. Keep true to the ideals of your father and grandfather. Don't say or do anything which might bring bad name to your ancestors. May God be your protector !'

The two brothers were taken to Nawab Wazir Khan's court. On reaching there, they shouted loudly in one voice, '*Wahiguru Ji ka Khalsa, Sri Wahiguru Ji ki Fateh.*' All eyes were turned in their direction. Their slim, handsome persons, their calm, bright faces, and their fearless appearance, won the admiration of all present in the court. Sucha Nand, a Brahman courtier of the Nawab, advised the little prince to bow to the Nawab.

'No,' said Baba Zorawar Singh, the elder of the two. 'We have been taught to bow to none but God and the Guru. We will not bow to the Nawab.'

This bold, unexpected reply astonished everybody. Even the Nawab could not help admiring the brave little one. Then he said to them, in a soft voice, 'Children, your father and two elder brothers have been killed at Chamkaur. They were infidels and deserved that fate. But you are lucky. Good luck has brought you to an Islamic *darbar.* Embrace Islam, become one with us. You will be given wealth, rank, and honour. When you grow up, I shall marry you to beautiful daughters of respectable chiefs. You will live happy lives. You will be honoured by the Emperor. If you say "No" to my offer, you will be treated as infidels are treated. You will be put to death with torture.'

Baba Zorawar Singh, looking at his younger brother, said in a whisper, 'My brother, the time to sacrifice our lives has arrived. What do you think ? What should be our reply ?' Baba Fateh Singh, who had seen but six winters, replied, 'Brother dear, our grandfather, Guru Tegh Bahadur, parted

with his head; he stoutly refused to part with his religion. We should follow his example. We have received the baptism of the spirit and the sword. We are the Guru's lions. Why should we fear death ? It is best that we should give up our lives for the sake of our religion. I am prepared to die.'

Baba Zorawar Singh was pleased to hear the brave words of his younger brother. He then said, 'That is good, indeed. We should preserve the good name of our noble family. The blood of Guru Arjan, Guru Har Gobind, Guru Tegh Bahadur, and Guru Gobind Singh runs in our veins. We are their descendants. We cannot do anything unworthy of our family.'

Then Baba Zorawar Singh raised his voice and said, 'Hear O Nawab. You say that our father has been killed. That is a lie. He is alive. He has yet to do a good deal of work in this world. He has to shake your empire to its roots. Know that we are sons of him who, at my age, sent his father to sacrifice his life at Delhi. We hate and reject your religion. It makes you behave like beasts of prey. We reject your offers of positions and pleasures. It has been the custom of our family to give up life but not to give up faith. Our choice is made. Let your sword do its work. We invite you to do your worst.'

These words alone were enough to inflame the haughty Nawab. But Sucha Nand chose to pour oil over the fire. He said, 'So, such is their behaviour at this tender age. What will it be when they grow up ? They will follow their father's example, and destroy imperial armies. What good can be expected from them ? This offspring of a cobra should be crushed in time.'

The Nawab whispered to him, 'What you say is true and wise. But I should like to make them embrace Islam. They will be valuable additions to our community. There need be no hurry. They cannot run away. Let us give them time to

think and consult with their aged grandmother. We shall try again tomorrow to make them yield.'

Then, turning to the two brothers, he said, 'I do not want to act in haste. I give you time to think over the matter. Be wise and decide in favour of accepting my offer. You will live in peace, happiness, and honour. If you refuse, you will be given such tortures that your cries will be heard far and wide. Then you will be cut into pieces like fodder.'

Then he ordered them to be taken back to the tower.

Meanwhile, in the tower, after sending her grandsons to the Nawab's court, Mata Gujri sat down to pray. She kept on praying all the time that they remained away from her. She prayed, 'O kind Almighty Father, Sustainer of the Helpless, Strength of the Weak, Champion of the Friendless, Protector of the Unprotected, Boundless Ocean of Mercy and Kindness, help and protect my little, innocent grandsons. Give them the strength to keep firm in their faith and resolve. Keep them from faltering and wavering. So help them, so inspire them, that they may prove worthy sons of their father, worthy grandsons of their martyred grandfather. May they keep true to their family's traditions and practices ! May they be brave and strong enough to withstand all threats and temptations ! May they prefer parting with life to parting with their faith ! And O my dear jewels, keep firm ! Keep your minds fixed on God ! May He help you ever !'

God answered her prayers. He gave her grandsons what she had prayed Him to give them. At the same time, the thought waves sent by her certainly gave strength to her grandsons. We have seen how bravely and fearlessly they behaved in the Nawab's court.

Wazir Khan's men then led the two princes back to the tower. Mata Gujri had been waiting for them eagerly. She was overjoyed to see them safe. A look at their faces convinced her that they had kept firm in their faith. She said a brief prayer of thanks to God. Then she rushed forth to

receive her 'little priceless jewels'. She took them in her arms. She hugged them lovingly to her bosom. She kissed them, again and again. Seating them on her lap, one on each side, she asked them to tell her what had happened at the court.

Baba Zorawar Singh narrated how he and his brother had behaved, what had been said to them, and what answer they had made:

Mata Gujri was immensely pleased to hear what her grandsons narrated to her. She pressed them again and again to her bosom. She blessed and patted them approvingly. 'Well done, my priceless, little jewels,' she said. 'I am proud of you. God be thanked ! Let us offer our thanks to Him.'

Then the three stood up with folded hands. She said the prayer of thanks. Then they bowed and took their seats. Then she said, 'You are sure to be called to the court again tomorrow. Behave there as you have done today. They will try again to make you give up your faith. They will threaten you. They will tempt you. Remember your grandfather's example and teachings. If they torture you, pray to God for strength, think of your grandfather; think of Guru Arjan. Call upon them to sustain you, to keep you from faltering and failing.'

During the night, while her dear ones slept on her lap, Mata Gujri remained absorbed in prayers for most of the time. When they woke up early in the morning, she washed their faces, combed their hair, and helped them to dress. Then they sat and said their morning prayers. She recited a number of hymns proper to the occasion. They listened attentively, with their minds fixed on the Guru and God.

In due course, the Nawab's men came to take the two *Sahibzadas* to his court. Mata Gujri patted and blessed them. She gave them the same advice as she had done the

previous day. They gave her the same assurance as they had given her the day before.

As on the previous day, on entering the court, the two brothers shouted aloud, '*Wahiguru Ji ka Khalsa, Sri Wahiguru Ji ki Fateh.*' The Nawab gave them the same threats and made them the same offers as the day before. They stood firm and gave the same answers as on the previous day. Finally, they said, 'Our choice is made. We have declared it again and again. We know what your orders are going to be. Announce them, and let this drama come to an end. Why waste time ?'

Sucha Nand Brahman again pressed the Nawab to give immediate orders for their death. But the latter again decided to give them more time to think things over. He still had hopes that they would yield. So they were again sent back to the tower.

At the tower, Mata Gujri received them in the same way as on the previous day.

Next day, the two brave brothers were taken to the court for the third time. On entering the court, they shouted louder than before. '*Wahiguru Ji ka Khalsa, Sri Wahiguru Ji ki Fateh.*' In the court the same threats were given, and the same offers were made as on the two previous days. The bold brave sons of Guru Gobind Singh made the same reply as on the two previous days.

Then the Nawab pretended to be kind. He softened his voice. He said to them, 'O boys, I hesitate to give orders for your death. You are so handsome, so graceful in appearance, and so clever. Why are you bent upon being killed ? I feel pity for you. By the way, boys, what would you do if we were to give you your liberty ?'

The bold brave boys replied in one voice, 'Do ? We would collect our Sikhs, supply them with weapons of war, fight against you, and put you to death. This is what we would do, if released.'

The Nawab said, 'If you were defeated in the fight, what would you do then ?'

'To be sure,' replied they, 'we would collect our armies again, and either kill you or be killed.'

The brave boys' fearless and bold reply enraged the Nawab. His pretended kindness was gone. He said, 'Well, you will have what you deserve. I order you to be bricked alive and then beheaded.'

On hearing the Nawab's words, the qazis, Sucha Nand, and a few others said, 'That is as it should be.' But most of those present in the court sat with their heads bent low, and their eyes wet and fixed on the ground. Then Sher Muhammad, Nawab of Malerkotla, said, Nawab Sahib, your order is against the rules of Islam. The Muhammadan law forbids slaughter of tender-aged, innocent children. They have done no wrong. The rules of our religion clearly lay down that a son must not suffer for the wrongs done by his father; that everyone is responsible for his own actions. So, under the laws of our religion, these boys should be allowed to go unharmed. They should not be punished for what their father has done.

But the qazis said, "What do you know of the holy law ? How can you claim to know more or better than we ? We say firmly that the holy law bids them choose between Islam and death. They have refused to accept Islam. They should die. The Nawab Sahib's orders are wholly in keeping with the holy law."

The Nawab expressed agreement with the qazis. Two Pathans were sitting near him. He said to them, 'You know your father was killed by the father of these two boys. You may avenge his death. I hand them over to you. Kill them in the manner ordered by me.'

But the Pathans shook their heads and said, 'Nawab Sahib, our father was killed on a field of battle. If these tender

ones were grown-up men, armed with weapons of war, we would certainly have fought them and killed them. That would have been a proper revenge. We cannot strike these innocent, tender-aged children.

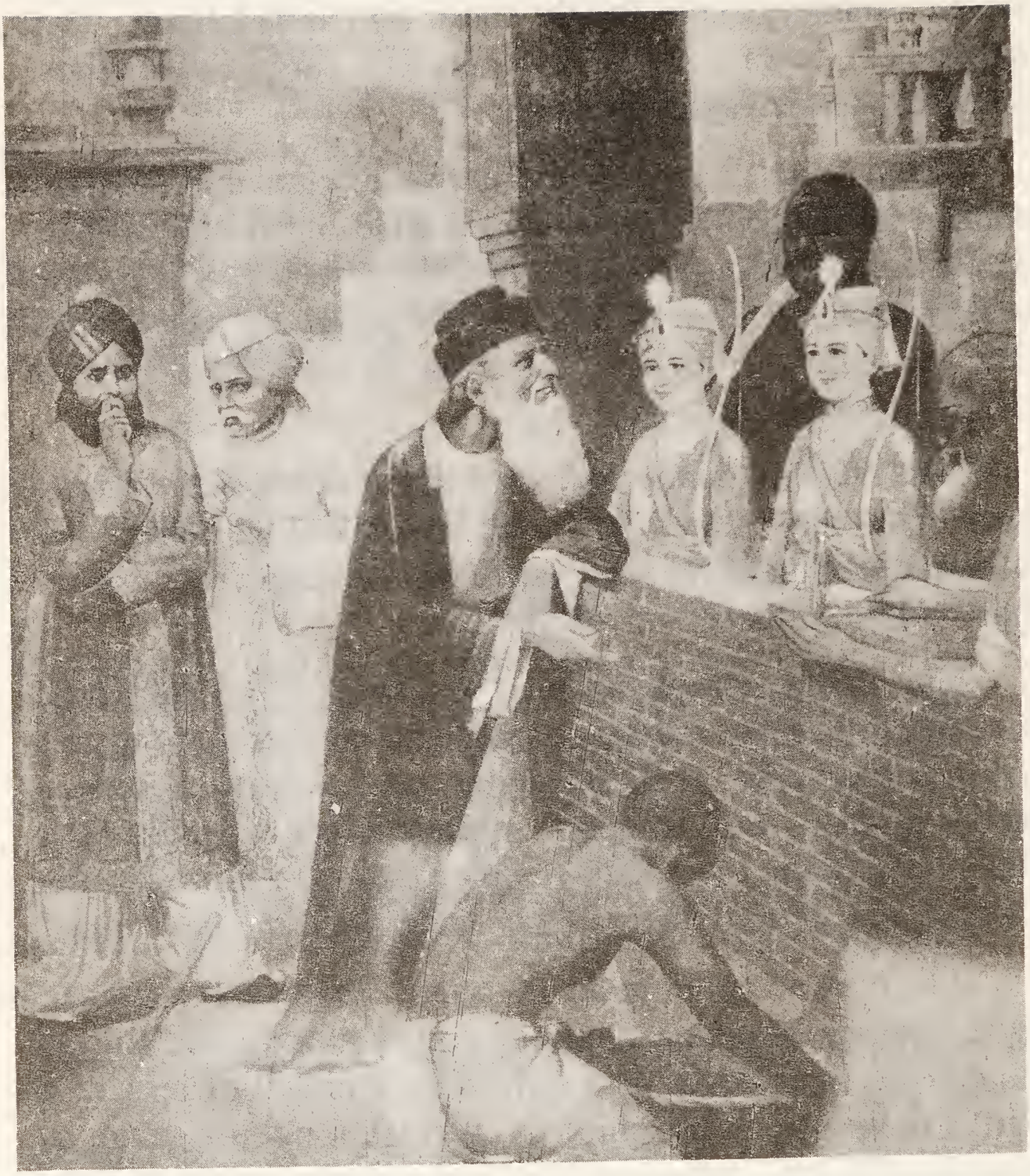
Then Wazir Khan looked at his servants and courtiers present in his court. He desired to find out if any of them would come forward to carry out his orders. But none was willing to do so. One of them, when pointedly asked, said, 'We are willing to sacrifice our lives for you. But we cannot kill these children.'

The Nawab then turned to a Pathan sitting near him and said, 'You know that your father was killed by these boys' father. You should revenge your father's death. You can do that by killing these sons of his killer.'

The Pathan shook his head and said, 'No, I cannot do that. My father was killed in a fair fight. He died fighting. He was not murdered. If these tender-aged children had been grown up men, with weapons in their hands, I would have challenged them; I would have killed them in a fair fight. But I would not murder them. They have done me no wrong.'

The Nawab could make no reply. He turned to left and right, seeking someone ready to do the bloody act. But all hung down their heads as a sign of their unwillingness, as a sign of their pity for the children. At last, looking behind, he saw two Ghilzai Pathans. The Ghilzai tribe was notorious for its heartlessness and cruelty. The Pathans offered to do the bloody deed. The two *Sahibzadas* were delivered to the Pathans. They led them away for execution.

Under the Nawab's orders, a part of the outer wall of the fort was pulled down. The two children were made to stand in the gap thus created. The Ghilzai Pathans were standing nearby. They had drawn swords on their shoulders, tightly held in their right hands. Their faces were fierce; their eyes were red; and their lips were pressed together. An official from the Nawab's staff was also there. He had been sent their



to see that the Nawab's orders were duly carried out. A qazi, with a copy of the Quran in his hand, also stood nearby. Masons were ordered to erect a wall around the children. They were told, 'Take care that the bricks press well and tightly against their bodies.'

After each layer of the bricks, the qazi urged the two to save their lives by accepting Islam. But they stood calm and quiet. They were busy in reciting the *Japji* and other hymns of the Gurus. They were thinking of their martyred grandfather,

Guru Tegh Bahadur. They hoped to be with him and in his arms in a few minutes.

When they were buried in the wall up to the shoulders, the Nawab himself came. He urged them to accept Islam and save their lives. They calmly shook their heads. By now, their faces were bright and glorious, expressing hope and joy. Then the Nawab made a sign to one of the Pathans. With a stroke of his heavy sword, the Pathan cut off Baba Zorawar Singh's head. It fell on the part of the wall that lay between the two brothers. Baba Fateh Singh bent his head and twisted his lips. It seemed that he was bowing to his martyred elder brother and kissing him.

The Nawab said to Baba Fateh Singh, 'You have seen what has happened to your brother. I advise you, for the last time, to accept Islam. Otherwise, your head, too, will be rolling on the ground.' He replied, 'Be quick, despatch me after my dear brother, so that we may go together into the open arms of our grandfather, and into the presence of the Almighty Father.' At a nod from the Nawab, the other Pathan cut off Baba Fateh Singh's head. It fell on the wall near Baba Zorawar Singh's head. The lips of the two martyred brothers were parted a bit as in a smile. The two brothers seemed to be smiling at each other.

In Sarhind there lived, at that time, a rich Sikh named Todar Mal. He heard that Guru Gobind Singh's mother and two younger sons had been imprisoned by Nawab Wazir Khan. Taking a large bag of gold coins with him, he hastened to the Nawab's court. His intention was to free them by paying as much money as the Nawab would demand. But he arrived too late. The two brothers had already been put to death. He visited the site where they had been bricked alive and beheaded. After paying homage to the two martyrs, he proceeded to their grandmother. She had not yet heard of the murder of her grandsons. She sat waiting for them, praying for them, and now and then, looking out for them. Todar Mal

tried to speak. But repeated sobs choked his voice. His eyes were melting into tears.

On seeing this, Mata Gujri became alarmed. She said, 'Tell me the truth. Why are you so broken down with sorrow ? What has happened to my dear grandsons ? Have they proved too weak ? Have they given up their faith to save their lives ? Have they turned their backs on their brave, noble family ? If they have so fallen, tell me. I shall weep with you at their fall. But if they stood firm in their faith, if they preferred death to proving false to their faith and family, tell me that with cheer. We shall then rejoice together. Then I shall depart happily and speedily after them.'

With his eyes melting into tears, and a voice choked with sobs, Todar Mal told her of her grandsons' martyrdom. On hearing this, she said, 'Well ! Have my darlings already gone to meet their grandfather ? O my dear ones, take me with you ! I had taken upon myself the duty of looking after you. But, my dears, now that you have gone what have I left to do ? O my soul, fly after them to the bosom of the Merciful Father. Farewell, O my dear ones. We shall meet again in our True Home.'

Saying this, she closed her eyes and began to repeat *WAHIGURU*. Soon she was gone to meet her grandsons. Todar Mal touched her feet and sobbed in anguish.

Then Todar Mal went to the Nawab. He sought permission to cremate the three bodies. He was told, 'You may do so. But for their cremation you will need a piece of land. You will have to pay for it. You may have the requisite land by paying as many gold coins as, placed closely together, would completely cover it.'

Todar Mal chose the site. He spread out gold coins to cover the whole piece of land that he had selected. He took the two martyrs' bodies out of the wall. He took out Mata

Gujri's body from the tower. He took the three bodies to the site selected and purchased. He cremated them and later buried their ashes there.

On the spot where the three bodies were cremated was later erected a gurdwara called *Joti Sarup*. At the place where the two *Sahibzadas* were bricked alive and beheaded stands the gurdwara called *Fatehgarh Sahib*. Nearby, at the site of the tower (*burj*) in which the three had been imprisoned, and where Mata Gujri had breathed her last, stands a gurdwara called *Mata Gujri's Burj* (Tower).

7
BABA BANDA SINGH BAHADUR

Baba Banda Singh was born on October 27, 1670 at Rajauri, in the Poonch district of western Kashmir. His father, Ram Dev, was a Rajput farmer. He was called Lachman Dass in his childhood. His father gave him training in farming, riding, shooting, swordsmanship, and hunting. From his early days, he was tender-hearted. Once, while hunting, he shot a female deer. He saw it dying before his eyes. He also saw two young ones fall from its womb and die in pain. The sight had a very deep and lasting effect on his tender heart. He resolved to become a *Sadhu.*

He left home. He met one Janki Das *Bairagi* and became his disciple. He became a *Bairagi*. He took the name of Madho Das. He wandered from place to place with a band of *Bairagis*. He came to the Panjab. There he met a *Sadhu* named Ram Das near Kasur. Madho Das became a disciple of *Sadhu* Ram Das. But he did not obtain peace of mind. He again began to wander from place to place. Thus wandering about, he came to Nasik, on the banks of the river Godavari. There he entered the hermitage of an old *Jogi* named Aughar Nath. He became his disciple. From Aughar Nath he learnt the art of working magic and miracles. After his teacher's death, he moved on to Nander. There he established a *dera* or monastery of his own. He spent his time in practising *Jogic* exercises and developing magical powers. He took delight in practising tricks of magic on his visitors.

Guru Gobind Singh visited his monastery in September 1708. He tried to practice his tricks of magic on the Guru. But he failed miserably. He concluded that he had found his

master, at last. He fell at the Guru's feet and said, 'I am your *banda* or slave. Pardon me. Save me. I shall act as your *banda*. I shall carry out your orders whatever they be.'

Guru Gobind Singh converted Madho Das *Bairagi* to his faith. He baptized him as a member of the Khalsa. Madho Das ceased to be a *Bairagi*. He became a Singh (Lion) of the Guru. He called himself the Guru's *Banda* or slave. He wanted Banda to be his name. Hence, he came to be addressed as Banda. After Baptism, his name was changed to Banda Singh. He is generally known as Baba Banda Singh Bahadur, or simply Banda Bahadur.

The Guru instructed him in the principles of his faith. He became acquainted with the history of the Sikhs and their Gurus. He learnt about the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev, Guru Tegh Bahadur, and the *Sahibzadas*; Guru Gobind

Singh's four sons. He learnt about the terrible hardships which the Guru and his Sikhs had suffered.

On learning all this, he was filled with righteous indignation. The Guru's *amrit* aroused the Rajput spirit in him. He yearned to be in the battle-field as Guru Gobind Singh's Saint-Soldier.

He said to the Guru, 'O true King, permit me to go to the Panjab. Permit me to punish those who committed such cruel deeds.'

His wish was granted. He was appointed the leader and commander of the Khalsa. The Guru gave him a drum and a banner. They were to serve as emblems of secular authority. He bestowed on him five arrows from his own quiver. They were to serve as a pledge of victory. He deputed five Sikhs to accompany him. They were to help and advise him. He also gave him a number of *hukmnamas*. They were letters addressed to leading Sikhs in the Panjab and to the general body of the Khalsa. They called upon all Sikhs to help Banda Singh in every way.

When they parted, the Guru said to him, 'Remain pure in conduct. Never touch another's wife. Be true in word and deed. Look upon yourself as a servant of the Khalsa who will be the Guru after my return to the Almighty Father's presence. Always act on the advice of the five Sikhs who will go with you. Never think of declaring yourself as a Guru. Do not set up a sect of your own. Always help the poor and the needy. Never harm the innocent. Have full faith in God and Guru Nanak. Always act on the tenets of the Sikh religion. As long as you act upon these instructions, victory will ever wait on your standard. If, at any time, you find yourself in some hopeless situation, pray to God and shoot one of my arrows. God will help you.'

Thus raised to the position of the commander of the Khalsa, Banda Singh proceeded to the north. On approaching Sehri and Khanda, he despatched Guru Gobind Singh's

hukmnamas to the leading Sikhs in the Panjab. He called upon them to join him. He told them that he had come to punish Wazir Khan and his assistant Sucha Nand for having killed the Guru's younger sons. He added that he would also punish the hill-rajas who had ill-treated the Guru.

The Sikhs flocked to him from all places. He marched towards Sarhind. More and more Sikhs joined him on the way. He went along punishing tyrants in various places. On November 26, 1709, early in the morning, he fell upon Samana. Sayyid Jalal Din of this city had beheaded Guru Tegh Bahadur. Two other Pathans of the same city had cut off the heads of the younger *Sahibzadas* at Sarhind. The Mughals, Sayyids, etc., of the place opposed him. But Banda and his Sikhs killed them all.

Then he fell upon other centres of Muslim oppression and tyranny, and punished the tyrants there. Such centres included Kanjpur, which was Nawab Wazir Khan's village. Then he attacked the town of Kapuri. The commander of that place, Qadam Din, was a notorious bad character. He used to forcibly take away young and beautiful Hindu women and girls, and keep them in his harem. Qadam Din was suitably punished. His palace was burnt.

Baba Banda Singh then turned his attention to Sadhaura. That was another centre of Muslim oppression. The Hindus of that place were not permitted to cremate their dead. They were not permitted to perform any religious ceremony. Cows were killed before their houses, and cows, blood and intestines were left in the streets. The ruler of that place, Usman Khan, was an object of special anger and hatred for the Sikhs. There was a special reason for this. A great Muslim saint of that place, Sayyid Budhu Shah, had helped Guru Gobind Singh in the battle of Bhangani. Later, Usman Khan had, tortured and killed Sayyid Budhu Shah on that account. Sadhaura was attacked. A severe battle was fought. Usman Khan was defeated. He and his agents were hanged.

In this way, he went on capturing all centres of Muslim oppression. Then he advanced towards Sarhind. This city and its governor, Nawab Wazir Khan, were most hateful to the Sikhs. It was here that the two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh had been bricked up alive and murdered. It was Wazir Khan who had subjected the Guru to many hardships at Anandpur. He had attacked the Guru at Chamkaur where the latter's two elder sons had been killed. He had pursued him to Muktsar, where his forty Saved Ones were martyred. Again, it was Wazir Khan who had sent the Pathan who killed the Guru himself at Nander. On account of all this, the Sikhs were burning with rage to wreak vengeance on the hateful ruler of this hated city.

Sikhs from all parts of the Panjab now joined Baba Banda Singh's forces. He advanced towards Sarhind. Wazir Khan came out with all his army to meet the Sikhs. In addition to his own forces, he had with him the forces of Lahore, Eminabad, Hissar, etc. A severe and bloody battle was fought on the plain of Chappar-Chiri, about 15 kilometres from Sarhind. Wazir Khan was killed. His forces ran away. Sarhind was taken two days later. The city was plundered and mostly destroyed. People like Sucha Nand were also punished. The wall where the two younger *Sahibzadas* had been bricked up was also pulled down.

Baba Banda Singh continued his conquests. Soon, he became master of the Panjab, east of Lahore. For his headquarters he selected Mukhlispur, which was a pleasant hilly place near Sadhaura. He repaired its old fort and renamed it Lohgarh or Iron Castle.

Emperor Bahadur Shah heard the news of Baba Banda Singh's successes. He was then in the Deccan. At once he returned to the capital. He sent a huge army against Baba Banda Singh. The latter waited for it at Lohgarh. The imperial forces arrived and encamped near Sadhaura. The Sikhs fell upon them with showers of arrows and musket-

balls. The imperial army suffered heavy losses. It was about to retreat. But then fresh forces came to its help. The Sikhs retreated into the fort of Lohgarh.

The imperial forces, more than sixty thousand strong, besieged Lohgarh. But the place was so well fortified that the imperial army dared not attack it for some time. The Sikhs were short of provisions. They had no hope of standing a long siege. They are said to have eaten their horses and other beasts to satisfy their hunger. They became desperate. They decided to rush out and cut their way through the enemy's ranks. Accordingly, Baba Banda Singh rushed out of the fort one night. He disappeared with his men into the hills of Nahan.

Soon after his escape from Lohgarh, Baba Banda Singh issued circular letters, called *hukmnamas*, to the Sikhs of various places. He called upon them to join him at once. In response to this call, Sikhs from all directions joined him at Kiratpur. He decided to attack and punish some of the Hindu hill-chiefs who had been troubling Guru Gobind Singh. Raja Bhim Chand of Kahlur was the first to attract his attention. He was ordered to submit. But he chose to offer resistance. He was defeated. The other Rajas submitted without resistance. The Raja of Chamba became Baba Banda Singh's friend and ally. He gave the Sikh leader in marriage a beautiful girl from his own family.

For some time, Baba Banda Singh stayed in the northern hill. Occasionally, he came down to extend his influence in the plains. He conquered some places like Rajpur, Brahmpur, Kalanaur, and Batala. But then very strong Mughal armies pursued him. He had to retire to the hills again.

Then an imperial order was issued, commanding all government officials to kill Sikhs wherever they were to be found. The order was strictly enforced. Sikhs and their sympathisers were slaughtered in large numbers. The

Emperor then issued another order. All Hindus were ordered to shave off their beards. That would enable them to be distinguished from the Sikhs. The Emperor knew that the Sikhs would never, even under pain of death, cut or shave their beards, or any hair whatever from their bodies. Baba Banda Singh was obliged to evacuate Lohgarh. He took refuge in the Jammu hills where he married a second time and founded a settlement of his own, now called Dera Baba Banda Singh.

After a stay of over one year in the hills, Baba Banda Singh reappeared in the plains. He conquered Kalanaur and Batala once more. Then he was attacked by a huge Mughal army. The army was helped by a number of Hindu Rajas. In the first encounter with the imperial forces, Baba Banda Singh fought so heroically that he very nearly defeated them. But the odds were too heavily loaded against him. He retreated to the village of Gurdas-Nangal about six kilometres to the west of Gurdaspur. The imperial forces laid siege to the village. Provisions were soon exhausted. The besieged soon began to suffer extreme hunger. In the absence of grain, the flesh of horses, asses, and other animals had to be used as food. They ate grass and leaves of trees. Then they removed the bark of trees and broke off their small shoots. They dried and ground them, and used them in place of flour. They also collected the bones of animals, ground them, and used the powder in place of flour. Some Sikhs cut flesh from their own thighs, roasted it, and ate it.

In spite of all this, the Sikhs withstood the huge imperial forces for eight long months. But how long could this continue? About eight thousand Sikhs had died. The remaining were reduced to mere skeletons. They had become too weak to wield any weapons. The imperial army entered the fortress. Baba Banda Singh and his famished followers were taken prisoner. Baba Banda Singh's wife and his three-year old son were among the prisoners.

From Gurdas-Nangal Baba Banda Singh and his

companions were taken to Lahore. There they were paraded in the streets. Then they were despatched to Delhi. Baba Banda Singh was bound in chains in four places and put in an iron cage. The cage was placed on an elephant's back. His companions, about two hundred in all, were also in chains.

Zakriya Khan, son of the governor of Lahore, was in charge of these prisoners. He thought that the number of prisoners was too small to present to the Emperor. Hence he caught every Sikh that he could find in the villages on the way. The number of prisoners finally was seven hundred and forty. Thousands more were killed. The heads of two thousand Sikhs were hung on spears and carried along with the prisoners. In addition to these, seven hundred cartloads of Sikhs' heads also accompanied the horrible show. If one cart be supposed to contain fifty heads, 700 carts must have contained 35,000 heads !

On reaching Delhi, Baba Banda Singh and the other Sikh prisoners were taken in the procession through the main streets of Delhi. At the head of the procession were carried two thousand heads of Sikhs. They were raised on bamboo poles. Their long hair waved in the wind. Then came Baba Banda Singh, seated in an iron cage placed on the back of an elephant. After his elephant, came the other Sikh prisoners. They were tied two and two on saddleless camels.

For miles and miles, the route was lined on both sides with troops and filled with merry crowds. They had gathered to enjoy the '*tamasha*'. They were beside themselves with joy. A Muhammedan writer saw the whole scene. He calls it a *tamasha*. He writes, 'The Musalmans were dancing with joy. The unfortunate Sikhs were happy. They were contented with their lot. There was not the slightest sign of sorrow or dejection on their faces. In fact, most of them seemed to be happy and cheerful. They were merrily singing their sacred hymns.

About two weeks later, began the murder of the Sikh

prisoners. One hundred of them were killed every day. Every batch was told, 'Those of you who embrace Islam will not be killed.' But not even a single Sikh thought of saving his life in that way. They had no fear of death. They called the executioner *Mukt* or the Deliverer. They cried out to him joyfully, 'O *Mukt* ! Kill me first.' They even disputed and argued with each other for priority in death. This work of butchery went on until all the prisoners were beheaded.

Among the Sikh prisoners was a tender-aged newly-married youth. He had been arrested from a village on the way. His widowed mother had followed the prisoners to Delhi. She wanted to save her son's life. She was told, 'Go and tell the Emperor that your son is not a Sikh. The Emperor will spare his life.' She went to the Emperor and said, 'My youthful son is not a Sikh. He is a prisoner in hands of Baba Banda Singh's men. Kindly order his release.'

The widow's appeal moved the Emperor. He ordered her son's release. She hurried with order, and gave it to the officer in charge of the executions. He called up the youth and said to him, 'As you are not a Sikh, you are free.' The boy said, 'Who says I am not a Sikh ?' The Mughal officer said, 'Your mother, there, says so.' The boy said, 'She is telling a lie. I am heart and soul a Sikh. Send me quickly after my comrades.'

He ran back to the place of execution where he was beheaded. He joined his martyred comrades.

These murders took place in March 1710. Baba Banda Singh and his leading companions were kept alive for about three months. His turn came in the first week of June, 1710. He and his twenty-six companions were taken in procession through the streets of the old city. He was taken to the tomb of Emperor Bahadur Shah, near the Qutab Minar. There he was paraded round the tomb. He was then offered the usual choice between Islam and death. He chose to die rather than give up his faith.

Then began his torture. His baby son was placed in his lap and he was asked to kill him. He refused to do so. The executioner then cut the child into pieces. Pulling out the dead child's palpitating heart, he thrust it into Baba Banda Singh's mouth. Baba Banda Singh stood calm and unmoved like a statue. He was completely resigned to the Will of God. He was reciting Sacred Hymns and repeating God's Name all the time.

Then the executioner began the horrible deed of executing Baba Banda Singh. First of all his right eye was taken out, and then, his left. Then his hands and feet were cut off; his flesh was torn with red-hot pincers, and finally, his head was chopped off. Baba Banda Singh remained calm and composed to the last. Thus did he achieve martyrdom and life everlasting on June 9, 1716.

8

BHAI TARA SINGH

Bhai Tara Singh was a Jat Sikh resident of village Van, in the district of Amritsar. He was truly a saint-soldier. He was a highly religious man, with a kindly, generous heart. At the same time, he was a strong, brave, and fearless fighter. He was very popular with the Sikhs. He was always in the forefront of every *Panthic* undertaking. He had already won laurels in the campaigns of Baba Banda Singh. He was most energetic and fearless in helping his brothers in faith, as well as others in need. His doors were open to receive everyone in need or trouble. He ran a free kitchen for all.

Sahib Rai, *Lambardar* of Naushehra, was proud, cruel and haughty. He was a tyrant. He used to let loose his horses in the green fields of the Sikhs. No one dared to drive them out. The Sikh peasants bore this quietly for a long time. Then they decided to meet him and request him to give up letting loose his horses in their fields. They said, 'Your horses eat away our crops. We have no other means of making a living. We are being driven to starvation. If you desire, we shall supply green fodder for your horses every day. Please don't let them loose in our crops.'

The *Lambardar* became furious. 'What is all this nonsense ?' said he. 'You are really an ungrateful lot. Don't you know what attitude the Muhammedan rulers have towards you Sikhs ? It is indeed risky for me to let you live in my village. I give you shelter in spite of the risk. What thanks do I get from you ? Be careful. My horses willgo about at their free will. If you misbehave again, I shall report against you to the Mughal authorities. Then you will learn what it means to insult a *Lambardar* of theirs. You talk of my horses

trespassing into your fields. Take care lest my scissors should trespass into your beards and long hair.' By this he meant that he would cut off their hair and beards.

The poor Sikh peasants were convinced that the *Lambardar* would not change his ways. He would not let them live in peace. They felt that continued stay in his village meant want, hunger, and starvation. He might even do something far worse. So they decided to leave the village.

Bhai Tara Singh heard of their sad plight. He sent for them. He undertook to give them food and lodging until they could make some suitable arrangements for themselves. They readily accepted his invitation and hospitality. They came to live in his village.

Sahib Rai's horses continued to graze freely in the peasants' green fields. But the peasants did not dare complain. Some daring Sikhs from Bhai Tara Singh's village decided to punish the haughty *Lambardar.* They drove away his horses in broad daylight. They sold them in a far off place. The money so obtained was used towards meeting the expenses of feeding the refugees from Naushehra.

Thereupon, Sahib Rai lodged a complaint with Mirza Jaffar Beg, Faujdar of Patti. He said to him, Tara Singh is an old rebel. He is very dangerous. He gives shelter to thieves, dacoits, and bad-characters. They commit raids all over the land. The lives and property of the people are insecure. An example must be made of this dangerous rebel. Otherwise others will begin to imitate him. A widespread unrest will be the result.'

The Faujdar chose to believe every word spoken by Sahib Rai. He was a cruel, fanatic Muslim. He was always on the look out for an excuse and opportunity to haul up and punish Sikhs. He sent a detachment of twenty-five mounted soldiers and eighty foot soldiers to proceed against Bhai Tara Singh. They intended to take the village by a surprise attack

at dead of night. But their plan was foiled by a brave saint-soldier, Bhai Baghel Singh Dhillon.

This brave Khalsa happened, at that hour, to be out in the jungle near the village. He saw the soldiers approaching the village. He immediately understood what their mission was. He decided to block their way so that Bhai Tara Singh and his companions should not be taken by surprise. With a shout of '*Sat Sri Akal*,' he suddenly fell upon the advancing soldiers, as a tiger would fall upon a flock of sheep. With one stroke he cut off the head of a nephew of Jaffar Beg. Another nephew met the same fate. Many more soldiers were cut down by him before he was overpowered. He died fighting like a true saint-soldier. The noise of the fight roused Bhai Tara Singh and his companions. They rushed out to meet the invaders. But the latter took to their heels before Bhai Tara Singh could give them battle.

Mirza Jaffar Beg hurried to Lahore and reported the whole matter to Khad Bahadur Zakriya Khan, governor of Lahore. The latter at once despatched a strong force against Bhai Tara Singh. It consisted of two thousand and two hundred fully armed horsemen. They had forty cannons and five elephants. The force was under the command of Momin Khan, the governor's deputy. With all that force, Momin Khan was to proceed against Bhai Tara Singh and his twenty-two companions. Such was the terror which the brave Sikhs inspired in the Mughal rulers' hearts.

The news of this expedition was conveyed to Bhai Tara Singh by a secret messenger from the Sikhs of Lahore. Another man, named Ghumanda, an Uppal Jat, offered to act as a scout for the Lahore army. At the same time, he sent information to Bhai Tara Singh.

Some men went to Bhai Tara Singh. They advised him to go away and take shelter in the jungle. But he refused to save his life by flight. He thought that to run away would be a cowardly act, unbecoming of a Khalsa. He was determined

to face death with boldness, and sell his life very dearly.

The invaders came at nightfall. They surrounded the village. As they advanced to attack, they were greeted with a rain of shots and arrows. Bhai Tara Singh and his twenty-two companions held the army at bay during the night. They were able to inflict heavy losses on the enemy. The invaders were very near losing their hearts. They got the impression that Bhai Tara Singh had a very large force with him. They began to doubt their own power to succeed against him.

But the rising of the sun betrayed the true number of Bhai Tara Singh's men. The invaders regained courage. They renewed their attack. Bhai Tara Singh and his men fought with wonderful bravery. One by one, his men fell martyrs after performing wonderful feats of valour and swordsmanship. At length, Bhai Tara Singh was left alone. He sprang into the enemy's ranks, roaring like a lion. With his sword he cut his way to the spot where Momin Khan was. The latter was riding on an elephant. Bhai Tara Singh aimed a heavy blow at Momin Khan. But as he leapt up to reach the man, he was surrounded by a large number of Mughal soldiers. They fell upon him from all sides and cut him to the ground. Thus did Bhai Tara Singh die gloriously after a valiant fight against heavy odds. He fell in a noble cause. He sacrificed his life in order to serve and save his brothers in faith. He was thus a true martyr. His memory is cherished by the Sikhs, as of course, it richly deserves to be.

His martyrdom occurred in the year 1725 A.D.

9
BHAI MANI SINGH

Bhai Mani Singh was born at a village named Kaibowal. The village was later destroyed during Nadir Shah's invasion. Its ruins are near Sunam, district Patiala. His father was a Jat Sikh, named Chaudhri Kala. His parents called him Mania. When he was about five years of age, his parents visited Anandpur. They did so to see and pay homage to Guru Tegh Bahadur. Guru Gobind Singh, then known as Sri Gobind Rai, was of about the same age as Mania. They became playmates and friends. When Chaudhri Kala and his wife decided to return home, Mania refused to accompany them. He expressed a wish to stay at Anandpur and play with Sri Gobind Rai. His wish was granted. He became a life-long companion and devoted Sikh of Guru Gobind Singh.

Mata Gujri took charge of Mania. She treated him like her own son. The two playmates lived together, dined together, played together, and learnt together. Mania became a great scholar.

When Guru Gobind Singh introduced his new baptismal or *amrit* ceremony, he baptized his playmate Mania, too. Thereupon, Mania became Mani Singh. The Guru held him in high esteem and consulted him on all matters. Mani Singh gave his whole-hearted assistance and support to Guru Gobind Singh in the establishment of the Khalsa Panth. He rendered most active and useful service in all schemes which the Guru started for the benefit of his people.

When Guru Gobind Singh evacuated Anandpur in December 1704, Bhai Mani Singh was with him. Under the Guru's orders, he conducted Mata Sahib Kaur and Mata Sundri to Delhi. There he busied himself in serving them. In

1705-06 he accompanied them to Damdama Sahib. There under Guru Gobind Singh's direction, he wrote a copy of Guru Granth Sahib. Later he accompanied the Guru to the Deccan. When the Guru was about to depart from this world, he sent Bhai Mani Singh to Delhi alone with Mata Sahib Kaur. At Delhi, he busied himself in serving Mata Sahib Kaur and Mata Sundri. He also did much to preach and popularize the Sikh faith.

After the martyrdom of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur, some Sikhs began to regard him (Baba Banda Singh) as Guru. They were called *Bandeis*. But the strict followers of Guru Gobind Singh, or *Tat Khalsa*, believed that the system of personal Guruship had ended with the tenth Guru. The *Bandeis* began to claim that they should have an equal share in the management of the gurdwaras and other affairs of the Panth. But the *Tat Khalsa* refused to accept this claim. They did not favour such divisions in the Panth. Still, the *Bandeis* persisted in their claim. Much tension was created between the two parties.

Mata Sundri, who was residing at Delhi, became aware of these troubles. She sent Bhai Mani Singh to Amritsar, with Sri Kirpal Singh, the maternal uncle of Guru Gobind Singh. He was charged with the duty of bringing about peace and unity among the Sikhs. He was appointed *Granthi* (or head priest) of the Darbar Sahib. He was asked to organize the service in the temple and to manage its affairs. He was further told by her, 'Don't send any money from the offerings to me. The whole income should be spent there. It should be spent in maintaining the service, *langar,* and other needs of the institution.

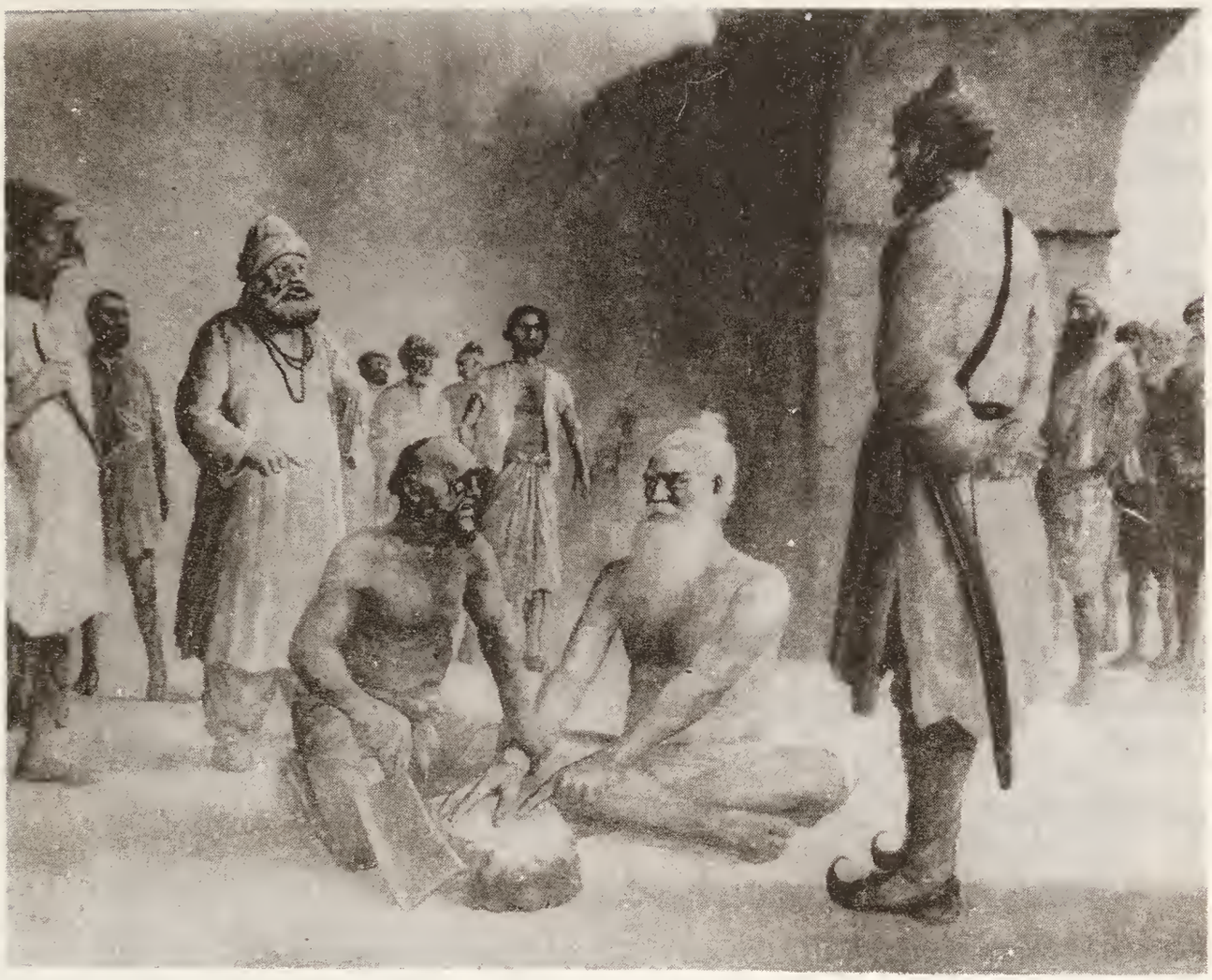
Bhai Mani Singh and his companion arrived at Amritsar in the beginning of 1721 A.D. In consultation with the notables of the city, they put the affairs of the temple in order.

A few days later it was the Baisakhi fair. Elaborate arrangements were made for the grand celebrations.

Thousands of Sikhs gathered round the tank. The *Tat Khalsa* and the *Bandeis* also gathered in large numbers. They were preparing to come to blows. But Bhai Mani Singh came between them and saved the situation. He suggested that instead of fighting, they should decide their claim by casting lots. He took two slips of paper. On one he wrote, '*Fateh Wahiguru Ji Ki*'. These words were used by the *Tat Khalsa* when meeting and saluting each other. On the other slip he wrote '*Fateh Darshan*'. These words were used by the *Bandeis* for the same purpose. Both the slips were immersed in water at *Har Ki Pauri*. The agreement was that the party whose slip rose first to the surface, would be considered to have carried the day. For some time neither slip came up to the surface. It seemed as if both the slips had sunk for ever. The parties stood in great suspense. At long last, the slip with *Fateh Wahiguru Ji Ki* came to the surface. The *Tat Khalsa* was declared to have won. The *Bandeis* took it as the Guru's verdict. They agreed to give up their claim.

In this way, on account of Bhai Mani Singh's wisdom and sweetness, the dispute was settled in a peaceful manner.

Bhai Mani Singh was the most learned and respected man of his time. As Granthi of the Darbar Sahib, he did very valuable work for the Panth. His masterly exposition of *Gurbani* was appreciated by all. It drew an immense congregation every day. His saintly life and affectionate manners won everybody's esteem and admiration. He wrote a number of scholarly books, like the *Gian Ratnavali*. He also compiled the *Dasam Granth*. He prepared a revised edition of Guru Granth Sahib. In the current accepted edition, the compositions of the Gurus and the Bhagats are arranged in the order of *Ragas* or musical measures. The words in every line are joined together. This fact makes it difficult for one to read the hymns correctly. Bhai Mani Singh wrote down all the hymns of every Guru and every Bhagat together. In the beginning he wrote down all the



hymns of Guru Nanak, then those of Guru Angad, and so on. He also wrote the words of the hymns separated from each other. But his work was not approved by the Panth.

For years the Muslim rulers had carried on a large scale massacre of the Sikhs. All efforts were made to prevent the Sikhs from assembling in their favourite shrine, the Darbar Sahib, Amritsar. Therefore, for years the Diwali festival had not been held there. In the year 1738, Bhai Mani Singh applied to the Governor of Lahore for permission to hold the Diwali festival in the temple. Permission was given on condition that Bhai Mani Singh should pay to the government five thousand rupees after the fair. The fair was to last for ten days. Bhai Mani Singh hoped that he would be able to pay the sum out of the offerings to be made by the Sikh visitors. He issued invitations to the Sikhs of all places. In response to that invitation, thousands of them started from their homes.

But the governor's intentions were not good or friendly. He sent a large force to Amritsar under the command of Diwan Lakhpati Rai. This man was a bitter and sworn enemy of the Khalsa. The governor said that the force was intended to keep order. But the real purpose was to prevent the Sikhs from gathering in large numbers. The force was to stay at Ram Tirath, near Amritsar. It was to march towards the city on the day of the fair. Seeing it advancing towards the city, the Sikhs would be frightened, and would disperse of their own accord. Such was, in fact, the result. The *mela* (fair) dispersed at the approach of the Mughal army.

Bhai Mani Singh had expected that the fair would be attended by a large number of the Khalsa. He had expected that the fair would last for ten days. He had hoped that the offerings made by the Sikhs would enable him to pay to the government the agreed sum of five thousand ruppes.

But no fair had been held. No gathering had taken place. No offering had been received. Hence Bhai Mani Singh was unable to pay the agreed sum of five thousand rupees. He was arrested for his failure to make the payment. He was taken to Lahore in chains. There he was condemned to death by torture. He was told that he could save his life by embracing Islam. He stoutly and resolutely refused to give up his religion.

Orders were given that his body should be cut to pieces, limb by limb. As the executioner started his work, Bhai Mani Singh sat calm and serene. He was absorbed in meditating on God and repeating the Guru's word.

Bhai Mani Singh was martyred about one month after the day on which the Diwali festival was to have been held in 1738 A.D. His *Shahid Ganj* is outside the Masti Gate of Lahore, and near the Lahore Fort.

10
BHAIS BOTA SINGH AND GARJA SINGH

The Mughal Emperor of Delhi and the Mughal governor of Lahore had taken vows to destroy the Sikhs, root and branch. Orders were given that all Sikhs—men, women, and children were to be put to death. It was declared lawful to plunder their homes and seize their property. Their houses were to be looted and plundered. They were to be hunted down like wild beasts. Not only government officials, but even notable Hindus and Muhammadans, vied with one another in this cruel campaign of loot, arson and murder.

Special rewards were offered for the capture and destruction of the Sikhs. It was announced, 'Any person giving information which leads to the arrest of a Sikh, will get ten rupees. Fifty rupees will be awarded to him who brings the head of a Sikh. Eighty rupees will be given to him who captures and brings a Sikh alive.'

It has to be borne in mind that eighty rupees in those days would be equal to a few thousand rupees today. So, the rewards were very tempting, indeed.

The whole machinery of the government was put into motion to crush the Sikhs. Even non-official Zamindars were made to lend a hand in this campaign of ruthless genocide. Some Zamindars used to send cartloads of heads to Lahore. This campaign was most virulent in the Majha tract.

As a result of this fierce persecution, most of the Sikhs left the plains. They took shelter in places away from human habitations. These places were the Shivalik hills, the Lakhi

jungle, and the sandy deserts of Rajputana. The few who still chose to remain in the Majha, had to pass their days in bushes and forests, here and there. Sometimes, some persecutors or evilwishers of theirs would boast that the Sikhs were afraid to appear in the plains. Such taunts would cause some daring Sikhs to come out of their hiding places, and make their presence known and felt. One such daring Sikh was Bhai Bota Singh.

Bhai Bota Singh was a Jat Sikh of Bharana, now in Pakistan. He had a companion named Bhai Garja Singh Ranghreta. They used to come occasionally to Amritsar at night in order to bathe in the sacred tank. They spent the rest of the day in the bushes near Tarn Taran. Bhai Bota Singh was a deeply religious man. He passed his life in reciting the Guru's sacred hymns and meditating on God. By nature, he was a peace-loving saint. But, at the same time, he could be a mighty soldier, if necessary.

It was towards the end of 1739, when one day, a party of wayfarers noticed Bhai Bota Singh and his companion near Nurdi (Serai Nurdin). The two were returning from a secret pilgrimage to the Darbar Sahib at Amritsar. 'Look there', said one of the wayfarers, 'there goes a pair of Sikhs'. 'O, no', said another. 'They can't be Sikhs. There is no Sikh left anywhere in the neighbourhood. All of them have been either killed or driven away. Zakriya Khan, governor of Lahore, has proudly proclaimed that he has exterminated the Sikhs that no Sikh exists in the Panjab.' But, said the first man, 'I am sure that they are Sikhs.' 'In that case,' said the other, 'they must be a pair of cowards, jackals, hiding about to save their skins. The Sikhs are not subject to such fears.'

These taunting remarks stung Bhai Bota Singh. A Singh of Guru Gobind Singh was, to him, as brave as a lion. That a Singh or lion should be called a jackal was more than he could stand. The Guru's Khalsa, he felt, could not be exterminated. Zakriya Khan must be made to realize that his

boast was empty, that the Khalsa was in existence and would ever continue to exist, in spite of all that he and his ilk might do. Indeed, the taunt awoke the soldier in that saint. He decided to come out into the open, make his presence felt, by Zakriya Khan and his government, and to maintain the prestige of the Khalsa. His companion was of the same view.

Bhai Bota Singh and his companion came out from the bushes. They took their position on the then Grand Trunk Road near Nurdi (Serai Nurdin), a few miles west of Tarn Taran. In those days, this road connected Delhi and Lahore. As mere bravado and show of courage, Bhai Bota Singh began to collect toll tax of one anna per cart and one pice per donkey load. None dared to refuse his demand. All paid it readily and quietly. Nobody dared make a report to the government. Their weapons were big sticks cut from *kikar* trees.

This went on for some time. Bhai Bota Singh's presence was, no doubt, felt by those who used the Grand Trunk Road. But it had not yet been felt by the government. Bhai Bota Singh did not like it. He had not taken this position merely for collecting toll. His object was only to prove to the fanatical rulers that, in spite of their all-out effort to exterminate the Sikhs, the Sikhs were still very much in existence. Therefore, he wrote direct to the governor, Nawab Zakriya Khan, at Lahore, announcing himself and the tax he was levying on travellers. He gave it to a traveller bound for Lahore and asked him to deliver it to the governor there. The traveller undertook to do so.

The letter was, of course, in Panjabi. Its words were as follows :

"Chithi likai yun Singh Bota,
Hath hai sota,
Vich rah khalota,

Anna laya gadde noo,
Paisa laya khota,

Akho Bhabi Khano nun
Yun akhe Singh Bota".

In English the words would read :

"Thus writes Bota Singh a letter,
With a big stick in hand
On the road I stand,

Levying an anna for a cart
And a pice for a donkey-load.
Tell sister-in-law Khano
That this is a message from Bota Singh."

The letter was a clear and daring challenge to the haughty governor. He was red with rage. Immediately he, sent a detachment of one hundred fully armed horsemen under the command of Jalal Din, to arrest Bhai Bota Singh.

On approaching Nurdi, they saw the two Sikhs standing on the road. They held big *kikar* sticks in their hands. They had no other weapon; no axe, no lance, and no sword. Approaching them, Jalal Din called upon them to surrender. Bhai Bota Singh replied, 'Sikhs know no surrender. We are not used to that sort of act. You would certainly like very much to take us alive to your governor and earn his good opinion. He would like very much to see me cut into pieces, limb by limb, like Bhai Mani Singh Ji. But we refuse to oblige you and your governor. We shall give up our lives, but we shall charge a heavy price for them. We shall die fighting. But we shall kill many before we die. Come on, and taste our big sticks. Send four of your best and strongest swordsmen against us two big-stick wielders. Come on !"*Sat Sri Akal*".

Jalal Din sent four of his bravest and strongest soldiers. He said to them, 'Fall on these beasts, and fell them with your sharp swords.' They advanced, crying, '*Ya Ali*'. Bhai Bota Singh and Bhai Garja Singh struck them repeated blows with their big sticks. Thus thrashed, the four Mughal soldiers were felled to the ground. Another batch of four met

the same fate. Then Jalal Din ordered all his soldiers to make a joint attack.

Bhai Bota Singh and Bhai Garja Singh were surrounded by shouting swordsmen. The unequal fight could not last long. The brave Sikhs fell martyrs at last; but only after over a dozen Mughal soldiers had been despatched by them to hell.

Thus did they make their presence felt by the government of Zakriya Khan. Thus did they demonstrate that they were not cowards, but bold and daring saint-soldiers of Guru Gobind Singh; that they were not jackals, but lions. Thus did they show Zakriya Khan that his boast of having exterminated the Khalsa was altogether empty; that the Khalsa was very much in existence, and would continue to exist, in spite of all that he and his ilk might do.

This happened in the year 1739 A.D.

11
BHAI MEHTAB SINGH

The Mughal government had started an all-out campaign against the Sikhs. As a result, most of the Sikhs had left the plains. They had taken shelter in places like the Shivalik hills, the Lakhi jungle, and the sandy deserts of Rajputana. Sometimes, however, they used to come out of their hiding and make their presence felt. One such occasion was Nadir Shah's invasion of India.

Nadir Shah of Persia had overrun the Panjab and plundered Delhi in the early months of 1739 A.D. On the way back, he decided to avoid the heat of the plains. So he took a northerly route under the Shivalik hills. A number of Sikhs were passing their days in those hills. They decided to plunder the invader and plunderer. They fell on the rear of the hindermost part of his army. They took away much of his booty.

This action astonished Nadir Shah. He called a halt at Lahore. He enquired from Zakriya Khan, governor of Lahore, 'Who are these people who have dared to interfere with my onward march ? Who are these bold mischief-makers ?'

Zakriya Khan replied, 'They are a group of *fakirs*. They visit their Guru's tank at Amritsar twice a year. After bathing, they disappear.'

'Where do they live ?' asked Nadir Shah.

'Their saddles are their homes,' replied the governor.

'Take care', said Nadir Shah, the day is not far off when they will take possession of your country.'

'Nadir Shah's remark cut Zakriya Khan to the quick.

He resolved to intensify his campaign against the Sikhs. He re-started the practice of offering rewards for their capture and destruction. Thousands of Sikhs were killed. Soon, the plains seemed to have been cleared of them.

However, another action still was taken against them. The Darbar Sahib of Amritsar was occupied. Its approaches were guarded by military pickets. The latter prevented the Sikhs from assembling in their favourite sacred place.

Massa Ranghar of Mandiali was put in charge of the Darbar Sahib. He was the most active of the Chaudhries engaged in capturing and destroying the Sikhs. He turned the holy precincts into a stable. The inmost temple was turned into a *nautch-house* (dance hall). He used to smoke and drink, and enjoy the dance of public women there.

The news of this disrespectful use of the sacred temple was conveyed by some persons to a party of Sikhs living in Jaipur, Rajputana. One of those Sikhs was Bhai Mehtab Singh. He was a Jat Sikh of Mirankot, near Amritsar. He was astonished at the news. He said to the messenger, "You have heard of this outrage to the sacred place, and yet you still live and go about telling the news to others ! Why was not Massa Ranghar killed then and there ? Is there no Sikh left ?"

'No,' replied the messenger. 'There is no Sikh there with a greater sense of honour than those who have run away to places like Jaipur in order to save their lives.'

Bhai Mehtab Singh was a strong-bodied brave young man. The messenger's taunt stung him like a scorpion. He stood up at once, took his sword, and said, 'I shall go and cut off Massa's head with this sword, and bring it here.

He saddled his horse and got ready to gallop away. Bhai Sukha Singh of Mari Kambo offered to go with him. Both galloped off towards Amritsar. When they arrived close to the sacred city, they disguised themselves as Muhammadans.

They filled two bags with wellrounded pieces of broken earthen pots. Each of them placed one of the bags before him on the horse. They looked like Muhammadan *Lambardars* come to pay their land revenue.

They reached Amritsar in August 1740. They entered the precincts of the Temple. To the guards they said, 'We have come to pay land-revenue to our Chaudhri.' They were allowed to go in. They tied their horses outside the main gate. The *ber* tree to which the horses were tied still exists. They came to Massa Ranghar. He was seated on a cot, smoking a *hukka.* He was intoxicated with wine. With half-closed eyes he was listening to the music of dancing girls. The sight made their blood boil. Bhai Sukha Singh stood watch near the door. Bhai Mehtab Singh went in and fell on the tyrant like lightning. With one stroke of his sword he cut off Massa's head. Massa's companions were taken by surprise. They ran about in terror. Before they could recover from their surprise and shock, Bhai Mehtab Singh and Bhai Sukha Singh had made good their escape and galloped away.

Zakriya Khan soon heard of Massa Ranghar's end. He was beside himself with rage on hearing of the daring deed of the two Sikhs. He summoned all Chaudhries of the parganas around Amritsar. He ordered them to find out and bring to him the murderer of Massa. A handsome prize was promised for his capture.

Harbhagat Niranjinia of Jandiala was a sworn enemy of the Sikhs. He had helped the government to hunt them. He came forward and promised to do his best in this case, too. He discovered that Bhai Mehtab Singh had murdered Massa. He conveyed this information to the governor. Thereupon, Bhai Mehtab Singh's village, Mirankot, was surrounded by a strong force under the command of one Nur Din, Harbhagat accompanied the force.

Bhai Mehtab Singh, of course, was not found there. But his little son, Rai Singh, was there. Before leaving the village,

Bhai Mehtab Singh had placed his little son under the protection of the village *Lambardar*. The latter's name was Natha Khaihra. Nur Din sent for him. He was told to bring the child with him. But Natha did not want to hand over the child to those butchers. Lifting him on his shoulder, he left the village by a backdoor. Three or four other villagers were with him. Nur Din's men learnt of his escape. Harbhagat, together with some soldiers, hurried after Natha and his companions. He overtook them soon and attacked them. A fierce fight took place between the two parties. Nathanand and his companions were killed. Rai Singh was seriously wounded. Harbhagat took him for dead. He went back, leaving the wounded child there. A Kambo woman happened to pass that way. She saw the wounded child and finding him still alive, she took him home. Under her motherly care, Rai Singh recovered in due course.

In the year 1745, Bhai Mehtab Singh came to his village in order to see his family and friends. Some evil person informed the local Muslim official that he was there. Bhai Mehtab Singh was captured, chained, and taken to Lahore. There he was told to choose between Islam and death. He stoutly refused to give up his faith. He chose death. He said, 'No true Sikh can ever agree to give up his faith, to turn his back on the Guru. I shall die a Sikh.' Thereupon, he was publicly broken on the wheel. That was a most painful mode of killing. Bhai Mehtab Singh remained calm all the time. He did not utter even a single groan or cry of pain. He kept meditating on God and repeating His Name.

His head was then cut off. It was hung up in Hiramandi. His body was thrown into a ditch.

Bhai Mehtab Singh was killed, and killed with the utmost brutality. But he is not really dead. Like all martyrs, he is still alive. His memory will last as long as the holy Harmandar at Amritsar still stands. We know that he tied his horse to a *ber* tree outside the holy place. That tree still

exists. Visitors to the Golden Temple respectfully touch and salute the said *ber* tree. They recall and admire the daring, noble deed of the great Sikh martyr. In this way he lives and shall live for ever.

12
BHAI TARU SINGH

Khan Bahadur Zakriya Khan, governor of Lahore, was carrying on a cruel, all-out campaign against the Khalsa. Hence, all daring and desperate Sikhs had gone away to places where the Mughal armies dared not trouble them. So they had become out of the reach of the government.

However, in several small villages there yet lived some gentle, harmless Sikhs. They were peaceful and peace-loving by nature. Daring military adventures were against their natures. They were averse to active clashes with the government. They wanted to live and work in peace. They kept themselves engaged in peaceful pursuits. At the same time, they practised the main principles of life taught by their Gurus. They earned their living by honest labour; they shared their honest earnings with those in need, irrespective of caste or creed; they recited *Gurbani* and kept meditating on God. They were friends and helpers of all who needed help. Such persons were loved and honoured by their neighbours; yes, even by their Muslim neighbours.

One such Sikh was Bhai Taru Singh. He was a Jat living in Poola, a small village in the present district of Amritsar. He was a young man of twenty-five. He was very gentle, kind-hearted and pious. He loved a peaceful life. He enjoyed helping and serving those who needed his service and help. He loved all and he was loved and honoured by all.

As we have seen, most of the daring, adventurous Sikhs had been driven from their homes. They lived in forests and jungles. One such place was Baba Buddha's *Bir*. It was quite near Bhai Taru Singh's village. Bhai Taru Singh took special pains to serve these exiled brethren of his.

He cultivated his fields. Most of what he produced was offered to those whom the iron rule had driven into the wilderness. His aged mother and youthful sister were gentle and pious like him. They took delight in assisting him in every way.

What they did for their exiled brethren was this. The two ladies ground the grain and baked cakes of bread. Usually, the cakes were made of a mixture of wheat and gram flour, salted and spiced. At night, Bhai Taru Singh took a basketful of them into the jungle nearby. He also carried a bucketful of milk. His exiled brethren used to be waiting for him. He distributed the cakes and the milk among them. He used to sit and talk with them during a good part of the night. Sometimes, he happened to have learnt of some fresh government move against them. He warned them of it.

This went on for some years. We have already mentioned one particular vile, mean enemy of the Khalsa. He was Harbhagat Niranjania of Jandiala. He was ever at pains to harm the Sikhs. He found out about the work being done by Bhai Taru Singh. He was cut to the quick to hear that Bhai Taru Singh was very popular with his neighbours, even with his Muhammadan neighbours. He decided to put an end to Bhai Taru Singh's life and activities.

So determined, he went to Zakriya Khan, governor of Lahore. He said to him, 'In a small village named Poola, there lives a dangerous rebel Sikh. His name is Taru Singh. He has the outward garb of a gentle, innocent, peace-loving man of religion. But really, he is a wolf in sheep's clothing. He is a friend and helper of thieves and dacoits. He helps and shelters men of bad character. He also supplies milk and food to Sikhs living in the jungles. Your orders are that nobody should help or harbour these outlaws. He does both. He thus disobeys your orders. He is a dangerous rebel. He should be hauled up and punished.'

Zakriya Khan rewarded Harbhagat for this useful

information. He sent a body of armed men to arrest Bhai Taru Singh and bring him to Lahore. His men went post-haste to Poola. They arrested not only Bhai Taru Singh, but also his young sister. They wanted to take her, too, to Lahore. Bhai Taru Singh's fellow-villagers paid a handsome bribe to the government party. In this way, they secured her release.

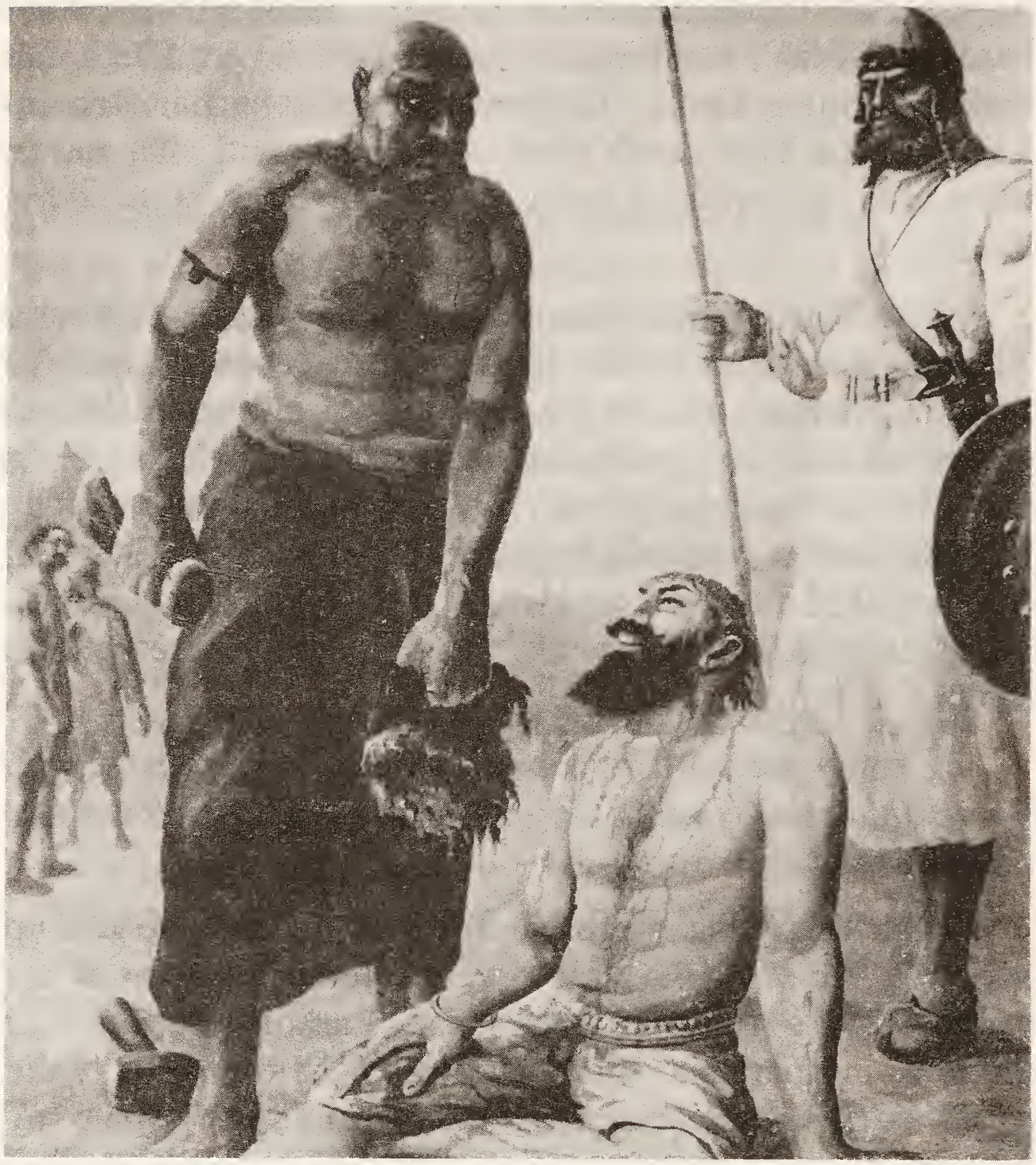
Bhai Taru Singh was chained and taken to Lahore. There he was put in prison. In the prison he was subjected to severe, inhuman torture for many days. He was asked to embrace Islam and get his hair cut. He was told, 'If you do that, you will be given in marriage a beautiful damsel of high Mughal family. You will be given riches and high position. You will lead a life of happiness and pleasure. If you refuse, your hair will be forcibly cut, you will be subjected to still severer tortures.'

'Finally, you will be beheaded or broken on the wheel. Be well-advised. Don't throw away your life and all that it can offer you.'

Bhai Taru Singh firmly and defiantly refused to give up his faith. He said, 'Even if I were offered kingship of the whole world, even if all the beauties of Paradise were offered to me as my personal servants, even if the treasures of the entire world were placed at my feet, I would not give up my religion. It is far more precious and dear than all these. I would not let my hair be cut, not even a single hair. I am prepared to die. May God and the Guru let me die with my hair all intact.'

Zakriya Khan said, 'Your God and Guru are powerless here. I am here to grant your prayer. Your hair shall not be cut. It will remain intact. Your scalp along with the hair shall be scraped off. What do you say to that ?'

Bhai Taru Singh replied, 'That will be very good of you, indeed. Kill me in any manner that you like. Be quick. I am



eager to join my martyred brethren at the feet of the Almighty and All-loving Father of all.'

Zakriya Khan gave the orders. Bhai Taru Singh was taken to the Nakhas, outside the Delhi Gate. Thousands had been butchered there in the near past. A shoemaker was ordered to scrape off Bhai Taru Singh's scalp. Bhai Taru Singh stood the ordeal bravely. He went on reciting the *Japji* and repeating the Name of God. The scalp with the hair intact was scraped off. It was thrown before him. He bowed,

and thanked God and the Guru. He was thankful that his hair had not been cut.

After that, he was taken back to the prison. The tortures were repeated. After a few days he let his soul fly from his body and go to the feet of the All-loving Father. This happened on the 1st of July 1745.

His torturer, Zakriya Khan, had died a few hours before him, after having borne intense suffering. He had an attack of kidney pain. He could not pass urine. His abdomen swelled up till breathing became difficult.

In this hour of terrible suffering, he thought within himself, 'I have put a saintly, innocent person to horrible tortures. May be my agony is due to that act of mine.' He sent a messenger to Bhai Taru Singh, asking for forgiveness. Bhai Taru Singh said, 'I have no ill-will against him. All happens as willed by God. As far as I am concerned, he is forgiven. But he will have to render an account of his doings. The inmates of Hell are waiting to welcome him.'

As soon as these words were spoken, Zakriya Khan was able to pass urine. His abdomen subsided. His pain was gone. But he died a few hours before Bhai Taru Singh's soul was released from his body.

13
THE LESSER HOLOCAUST

(Chhota Ghalughara—1746)

The Mughal government had vowed to destroy the Sikhs, root and branch. A large number of Sikhs, like Bhai Taru Singh, Bhai Mani Singh and Bhai Mehtab Singh had been martyred. General orders had been issued that no one should give any help or shelter to any Sikh. Mughal armies went about killing every Sikh found anywhere.

A band of Sikhs, driven from place to place, came to Eminabad, now in the district of Gujjranwala, Pakistan. They wanted to pay a visit to Rori Sahib, a gurdwara there sacred to the memory of Guru Nanak. They had been without food for several days. They wanted to purchase foodstuffs from the town. They wrote a letter to the chief officer of the place. In it they sought his permission to purchase foodstuffs from the town.

His name was Jaspat Rai. He was a bitter, sworn enemy of the Sikhs. He ordered them to go away at once, or he would drive them away himself. The Sikhs pleaded, 'We have had no food for several days. We shall stay for only one night to feed ourselves. We shall do no harm to anybody. We shall go away tomorrow morning.'

Jaspat Rai was a proud, hot-tempered man. He flew into a rage. He fell upon the Sikhs with all the force that he had with him. They resisted the attack. A Ranghreta Sikh named Nibhau Singh, climbed on to Jaspat Rai's elephant. With one stroke of his sword, he cut off Jaspat Rai's head. Seeing this, the Mughal army ran away.

Now, Jaspat Rai had a brother named Lakhpat Rai. The

latter was a minister of Yahiya Khan, governor of Lahore. He was an active opponent of the Sikhs. When he heard the news of his brother Jaspat Rai's death, he became mad with rage. He went to Yahiya Khan. He flung his turban at his feet and said, 'I shall tie it on my head only when I have destroyed the Sikhs, root and branch. I am a Khatri. Guru Gobind Singh, who created the Khalsa, was also a Khatri. This Khatri, here before you, will destroy what was created by that Khatri. I shall not call myself a Khatri until all Sikhs are destroyed, root and branch.'

He had a general order issued for the destruction of the Sikhs. To begin with, all Sikhs—men, women, and children—living in Lahore were arrested. They were handed over to sweepers for execution. A deputation of Hindus waited upon Lakhpat Rai. They tried to dissuade him from spilling innocent blood. But he would not listen to them. The terrible order was carried out. All the Sikhs of Lahore were murdered in cold blood. Their only fault was that they were Sikhs. They died for their faith. They became martyrs, all of those men, women and children. None of them agreed to save his or her life by giving up his faith.

It was announced with the beat of drums that no one should read the Sikh scriptures. It was further ordered that anyone uttering the name of the Guru would be arrested and killed. The use of the word 'granth' was also forbidden. The word 'pothi' was to be used in its place. Many volumes of Guru Granth Sahib were collected and thrown into wells and rivers.

A huge army, under the command of Yahiya Khan and Lakhpat Rai, set out to destroy the Sikhs. This army consisted of the Mughal army and thousands of soldiers sent by the Hindu and Muhammadan supporters of the Mughal government. About fifteen thousand Sikhs had taken shelter in the reedy marshes of Kahnuwan. The heavily clothed troops and their artillery could not pass through the marshes

to reach the Sikhs. But a way was cut through the reeds for the movement of the troops. With the help of guns, the Sikhs were pushed towards the Ravi. The Sikhs crossed the river. They were closely followed by Lakhpat Rai.

The only course open to the Sikhs was to go to the hills of Basohli. They hoped that the Hindu population there would give them shelter. But their hopes proved false. The people there had already received orders from Lahore to give no shelter to the Sikhs. As the Sikhs approached, they were received with showers of stones and bullets. They had to cry a halt.

They were in a desperate position. In front of them was a steep mountain. On that mountain were people who were against them and were showering bullets and stones on them. To their right was a fast-flowing, flooded river. Behind them

was the enemy coming in hot pursuit. They had no food and no ammunition. Their horses were weak with hunger and fatigue. They were too weak to go up the mountain.

They decided to go back to the Majha. But the Ravi was in flood. It was impossible to cross it. It was decided, therefore, that those who had no horses, should go towards the mountains and try their luck there. Those who had horses were to cut their way through the enemy.

Those who went to mountains managed to pass about six months in Mandi and Kulu. They had to face great hardships. But they were able, at last, to reach Kiratpur and join the Khalsa there.

The main body of the Sikhs rushed through the pursuing army. They were surrounded. Hundreds of them were killed. Some were taken prisoner. The remaining Sikhs were pursued into a jungle. There they were attacked by the army as well as by the people—Hindus and Muslims—collected from the neighbouring villages.

About two thousand Sikhs were able to cross the Ravi. They entered the Riarki tract of Gurdaspur. It was the month of June. They were hungry, barefooted, and wounded. The burning sand added to their sufferings. But they uttered no cry of pain. They never thought of surrender. They never thought of saving themselves by giving up their faith. They were determined to live and die as Sikhs. They tore off pieces from their clothes and tied them on their naked feet. In this way they crossed the hot sandy plain and reached the river Beas. They crossed that river near Sri Hargobindpur. Then they made straight for the Sutlej. That river they crossed near Aliwal and entered the Malwa.

Lakhpat Rai had got tired of fighting. He returned to Lahore. In this campaign he must have killed at least seven thousand Sikhs. Three thousand were taken as prisoners to Lahore. There they were insulted and tortured. They were

told that they could save themselves by embracing Islam. But none was prepared to purchase life at such a price. They were all beheaded at the place called Nakhas. Their heads were piled up in the form of pyramids. Their bodies were buried under the walls of a mosque.

This wholesale massacre of the Sikhs occurred in 1746 A.D. It was called *Chhota Ghalughara* or The Lesser Holocaust. As we shall see, another much greater and wholesale destruction of the Sikhs occurred in 1762 A.D. That was called *Wadda Ghalughara* or The Great Holocaust.

Over ten thousand Sikhs—men, women, and children—were brutally butchered in this campaign. They could all have saved their lives by giving up their faith and accepting Islam. But none of them even thought of saving his or her life in that way. They chose not to live as apostates, but to suffer and die as Sikhs. They preferred suffering and death to apostasy. They lived, suffered, and died as true devotees of their faith. They achieved glorious martyrdom. They are all remembered with respect and admiration by students of history, as well as, of course, by all Sikhs. They died to achieve everlasting life. Let us all bow our heads to them.

14
SARDARS SUBEG SINGH, SHAHBAZ SINGH

Sardar Subeg Singh was an influential Jat zamindar of Jambar, in the district of Lahore. He was also a government contractor. He was great scholar of Persian, a wise and upright man. He proved useful to Zakriya Khan on a number of occasions.

For many years the Mughal government pursued a policy of persecuting the Sikhs. It was determined to root them out completely. Thousands and thousands were murdered in cold blood. But the Sikhs just continued to grow. They never thought of giving up their faith to save their lives.

The martyrdom of persons like Bhai Taru Singh produced a wave of indignation among the Sikhs of the Majha. They decided to retaliate. They resolved to take revenge. They began to fall on government treasuries and caravans. Parties coming with chests of revenue meant for Lahore were waylaid and looted. As a result for some years no money from revenue could reach the government treasury. The forces of the government tried to punish the offenders. But they were unable to contact them; for the Sikhs did not live in houses or forts. After each attack, they used to run away to their camps in the forests.

This story of persecution and revenge went on for some time. The government, at last, felt tired of this method of dealing with the rebels. It decided to pacify and conciliate them. Accordingly, in 1733 A.D. Zakriya Khan represented his difficulties to the Delhi government. He suggested that a policy of conciliation should be given a trial. With that end in

view, he proposed that a grant be made to the Sikhs and a title be conferred on their leader.

The proposal was accepted. The next thing needed was to persuade the Sikhs to agree to the proposal. Zakriya Khan felt that to persuade them would not be an easy task. He turned to Sardar Subeg Singh for help. He said to him, 'If you succeed in bringing them round, you will do a good service to me and my government. It will be remembered, appreciated, and duly rewarded.'

Sardar Subeg Singh agreed to do his best. He agreed to meet the Sikhs and try his skill. At that time the Khalsa had assembled at the Akal Takht, Amritsar. He went there and held discussion with them. He informed them of the offer made by the government. He offered them the title of 'Nawab' for their leader, along with a Jagir of about one lakh rupees. They would not accept the offer. They were about to reject it outright. But Sardar Subeg Singh succeeded in overcoming their objections. Then they accepted the offer.

In this way, some sort of peace was made between the Mughal government and the Sikhs. Zakriya Khan felt relieved a good deal. He appreciated the part played by Sardar Subeg Singh in bringing about the reconciliation.

But after some time, the campaign of persecution was started once again. In the heat of that campaign even Sardar Subeg Singh was not spared. He was arrested along with his son, Sardar Shahbaz Singh. This is how it happened.

Sardar Subeg Singh had a son named Sardar Shahbaz Singh. He used to read in a Muhammadan school under a qazi. The boy was unusally handsome, bright, and promising. The qazi took a fancy to him. He wished to convert him to Islam. He wanted to marry his daughter to him.

The qazi tried his utmost. He used all his skill. But Sardar Shahbaz Singh was firm in his faith. Neither threats nor tempting offers could make him change his resolve.

Because of this, the qazi's fondness for the bright, handsome boy diminished. He became determined to finish him. He reported unfavourably to the government against him. He said, 'The boy has used disrespectful words against he Prophet. He has said foul things against Islam. This *kafir* deserves no mercy. He deserves death.'

On the basis of this report, Sardar Shahbaz Singh was arrested and taken to Lahore. He was to stand trial before the governor. At the same time, his father, Sardar Subeg Singh, was also arrested and imprisoned. It was said against him that he supplied information to the Sikhs.

But Zakriya Khan died before he could see the end of his victims. He was succeeded by his son, Yahiya Khan. This person was more cruel than his father. He had no soft corner in his heart for Sardar Subeg Singh. He took up his case and pursued it to the bitter end.

Sardar Subeg Singh was asked to give up his religion or suffer death at the wheel. He refused to give up his religion. Thereupon, he was put on the wheel and turned on it. The pain was sharp and intense. But it did not break his spirit. Then his son, Shahbaz Singh, was told, 'You can save your life by accepting Islam.' He refused to give up his faith. Thereupon, he was bound to the wheel. He was turned on it before his father's eyes. Both bore the torture with great patience. They went on shouting, '*Akal*' all the time. At intervals, the wheels were stopped and the two were asked, 'Do you agree to embrace Islam ?' Every time they shook their heads and shouted, 'No'. The wheels were set in motion again. The two kept on shouting, '*Akal*' ! '*Akal*'.

After some time, the voice of the boy became feeble. The wheel was stopped. The question was put to him, 'Do you agree to embrace Islam ?' The lad lowered his head as a sign of acceptance. Sardar Subeg Singh promptly looked into the eyes of his son and said, 'Say "*Akal*' ! Shout *Akal* !" Think of Baba Zorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh.' In a

moment, the boy recovered himself. He gave a hearty shout of '*Akal*'. The wheels were turned again. They had sharp knives arranged around them. They went on working mercilessly. The shouts of '*Akal*' grew feebler and feebler. Then they ceased altogether. Both left their bodies. They went away to join the ranks of illustrious Sikh martyrs.

This occurred in the year 1745.

15
BABA DIP SINGH

Baba Dip Singh was a Jat Sikh belonging to the village Pahuwind in the district of Amritsar. He was tall, strong, and uncommonly brave. He had received baptism from the hands of Guru Gobind Singh himself. He was a bold and fearless saint-warrior, ever ready to risk his life for the *Panth.* He took a praiseworthy part in many battles of Baba Banda Singh and helped him to win victories.

Besides being a strong and fearless warrior, he was a great scholar. In fact, he was one of the most scholarly Sikhs of his time. Along with Bhai Mani Singh, he helped Guru Gobind Singh in preparing the final text of Guru Granth Sahib at Damdama Sahib. Afterwards, too, he stayed and worked at that sacred place. He was in charge of that gurdwara. He spent his time in preparing copies of Guru Granth Sahib. Some he wrote with his own hand. Others he had written under his direct supervision. Copies of the Sacred Book written in his own hand or issued by him with his approval were accepted as most authentic.

At the time that we are talking of, Ahmad Shah Abdali was in India on his fourth invasion. On his return from Delhi, he stayed for some time at Lahore. He had experienced a good deal of trouble at the hands of the Sikhs. Hence, while staying at Lahore, he sent out a force to punish the Sikhs at Amritsar. The city was plundered. The sacred buildings, including Sri Darbar Sahib, were demolished. The sacred tank was filled up.

The news of what had been done to the holy places at Amritsar soon reached Damdama Sahib. On hearing it, Baba Dip Singh felt as if an arrow had pierced his heart. At

once he decided to go to Amritsar and avenge the insult to the sacred places there. No sooner said than done. He started immediately. A band of five hundred Sikhs volunteered to accompany him. He announced that the coming Diwali festival would be celebrated at Amritsar. Sikhs went on joining him as he went along. By the time he reached Tarn Taran, he had about five thousand men with him. All of them were eager to win martyrdom in the sacred cause.

All of them bathed in the sacred tank of Tarn Taran. Then they offered prayers. They put on the dress of bridegrooms. They tied festal ribbons called *ganas* on their wrists. They sprinkled saffron on their robes. Thus dressed, they marched forth to wed Princess death.

Jahan Khan, deputy governor of Lahore, learnt that the Sikhs were gathering at Amritsar to celebrate their annual

fair. At that time, one Haji Atai Khan was moving about with a large force. His object was to put down opposition and disorder in the countryside. Jahan Khan ordered Atai Khan to march upon Amritsar and punish the Sikhs. At the same time, a *jehad* or holy Muslim war was proclaimed with the beat of drums. All Muhammadans were called upon to join the army of *mujahids*, or soldiers bent upon holy war, against the rebel Sikhs.

Jahan Khan was thus able to collect two thousand horsemen. He proceeded at their head to meet the Sikhs advancing under Baba Dip Singh. The two forces met near Gohalwar, halfway between Tarn Taran and Amritsar. The Sikhs fought with such force and bravery that the Muhammadan army fled in all directions. Jahan Khan tried to rally them with threats. But his threats had no effect on the fleeing *mujahids.*

By then, Atai Khan came with a large army and artillery. His arrival turned the odds against the Sikhs. A fierce battle began. The Sikhs, with Baba Dip Singh at their head, went on fighting and advancing towards Amritsar. Near Ramsar, Baba Dip Singh received a mortal wound in his neck. He was about to fall. Just then, a Sikh near him said, 'Babaji, you had prayed that you should fall a martyr in the precincts of Darbar Sahib. But you seem to be departing here.'

Baba Dip Singh's head had been almost separated from his neck. But on hearing the Sikh's words, he rallied at once. He supported his head with his left hand. With the right hand he went on wielding his heavy *Khanda*, or two-edged sword, cutting down his enemies.

Thus fighting, he reached the precincts of Sri Darbar Sahib. His vow was fulfilled. He fell there to become a martyr. This happened in the year 1757.

At the place where he was wounded stands a temple in his memory. It is called Shahid Ganj Baba Dip Singh.

16
THE GREAT HOLOCAUST
(Wadda Ghalughara—1762)

In 1761 the Sikhs under Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia occupied Lahore. They proclaimed him king. He coined money in the name of the Guru. The Khalsa gathered that year at Amritsar to celebrate their annual day of Diwali. They passed a resolution to capture the strongholds of the allies and helpers of Ahmad Shah Abdali. These people, it was thought, were proving a hindrance to the liberation of the country.

The nearest helper and ally of the foreigner was Aqil Das Niranjania of Jandiala. He was a sworn enemy of the Sikhs. He had always aided their enemies. Sardars Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia informed him of the decision of the Khalsa. It was thought that he would submit and make a compromise with the Sikhs. But he did nothing of the kind. He at once wrote to Ahmad Shah Abdali and invited his help.

Ahmad Shah was already on his way to India. Aqil Das's messengers met him at Rohtas. He hurried towards Jandiala. He found that the Sikhs had raised the siege and gone away towards Sarhind. The reason for their hurried withdrawal was this: before meeting the invader they wanted to take their families to a place beyond his reach. There was another reason also. The governor of Sarhind, Zain Khan had recently killed Sardar Dial Singh Brar. The Sikhs wanted to avenge his death. They began to gather in villages close to Malerkotla. The chief of the place invited Zain Khan to help him. At the same time he informed Ahmad Shah About the gathering of the Sikhs near Malerkotla.

From Jandiala Ahmad Shah had gone to Lahore. When he heard the news of the Sikhs' gathering near Malerkotla, he started from Lahore on the 3rd of February, 1762. By making hurried marches, he reached the village of Kupp, near Malerkotla by the morning of the 5th of February. About thirty thousand Sikhs were encamped there with their families and all their belongings. He had already sent instructions to Zain Khan that he should attack the Sikhs on the front. He himself was to fall upon them from the rear. He ordered his soldiers to kill all people found in Indian dress. In order to distinguish Zain Khan's Indian forces from those of the Sikhs, the former were told to wear green leaves in their turbans. Several thousand Sikhs were killed. Most of them were women and children.

The Sikhs had been taken by surprise. Immediately they held a council. They decided to die fighting. Of course, they could have saved themselves by surrendering and giving up their faith, but the thought never crossed and

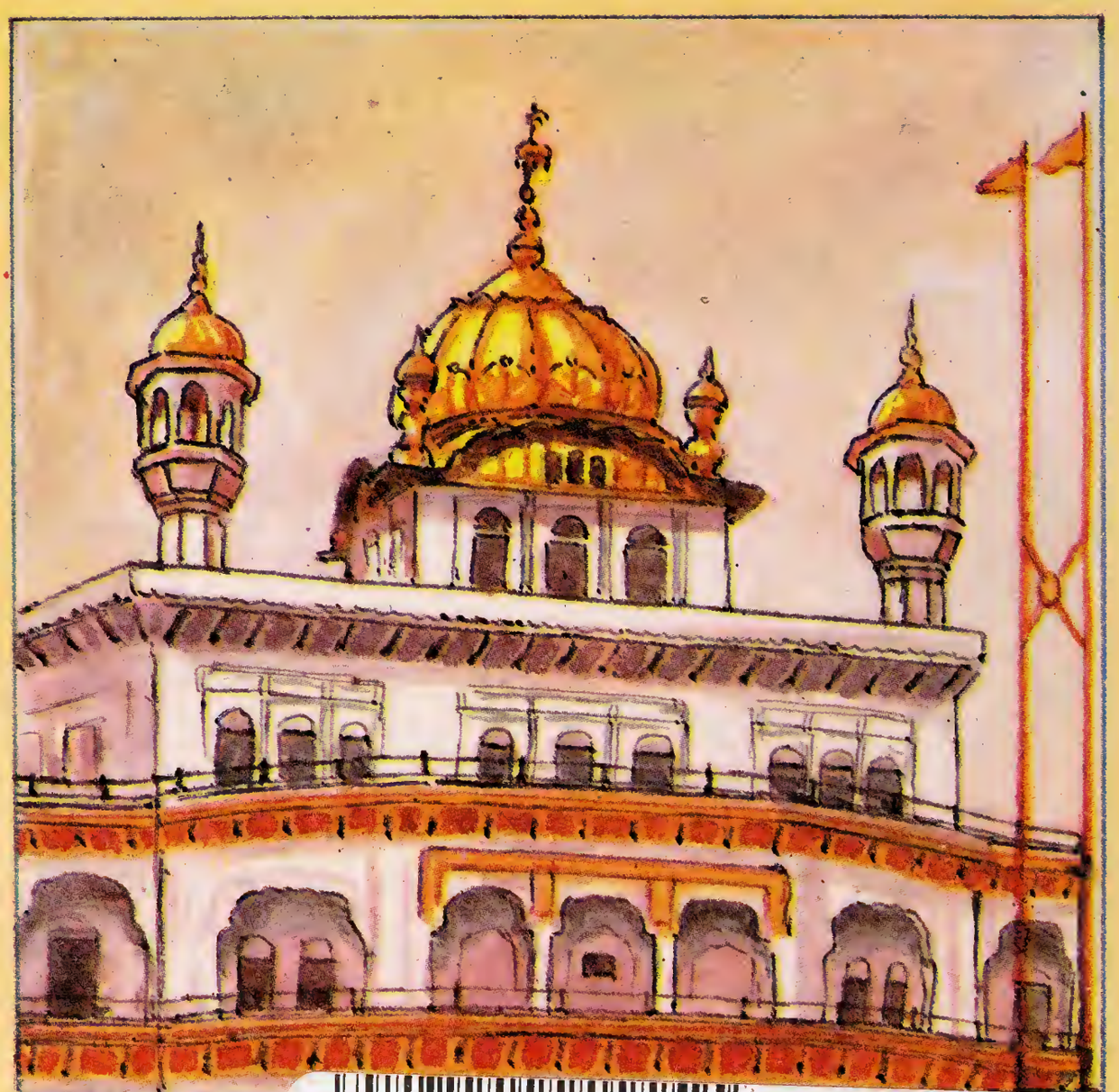
their minds. They threw a cordon around their women and children, and began to move forward. They moved on, fighting. Ahmad Shah wanted to have a pitched battle with the Sikhs. But they went on moving as they fought. They moved on fighting from village to village. The people of the places through which they passed gave them no shelter. They feared the invader. On the contrary, they fell upon them and killed a large number. The Sikhs continued to move on. Their aim was to reach Barnala. They hoped that, at that place, they would get help from Baba Ala Singh. If they got no help from him there, they were to pass on to the dry desert of Bhatinda.

But before they could reach Barnala, their cordon was broken by Ahmad Shah's soldiers. A wholesale massacre of the Sikhs followed. At least ten thousand Sikhs were killed in this action.

The wholesale destruction of the Sikhs occurred on the 5th of February 1762. It is called *Wadda Ghalughara* or the Great Holocaust. In all, over twenty thousand Sikhs men, women and children perished in this campaign of slaughter.

We should remember that these heroic Sikhs were massacred because they had tried to rid their country of cruel fanatic and despotic rulers. They were inspired with patriotic urges and emotions of the noblest type. They were freedom fighters in a most real sense. They were men of unshakeable faith, unbeatable courage, unbreakable will, and unmatchable capacity to do and suffer for their faith and ideals. They died heroic deaths in order to create conditions in which their countrymen could live with honour and self-respect. They achieved glorious martyrdom. They are remembered, and shall ever be remembered, with respect and admiration by students of history as well as, by all the followers of the Sikh Gurus. Let us bow our heads to these patriots and fighters for their and our country's freedom.

Sat Sri Akal



8170100100
07/20/2017 14.09-3
22
25